

1995

# The decline of professional boxing in Toronto, 1920-1993 (Ontario).

Andrew John. Lindsay  
*University of Windsor*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd>

---

## Recommended Citation

Lindsay, Andrew John., "The decline of professional boxing in Toronto, 1920-1993 (Ontario)." (1995). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 3815.

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters' theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email ([scholarship@uwindsor.ca](mailto:scholarship@uwindsor.ca)) or by telephone at 519-253-3000ext. 3208.



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

Your file    Votre référence

Our file    Notre référence

## NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

**THE DECLINE OF PROFESSIONAL BOXING IN TORONTO, 1920-93.**

by

**Andrew John Lindsay**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
Through the Department of Kinesiology  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Human Kinetics at the  
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1994

©1994 Andrew Lindsay



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et  
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa (Ontario)  
K1A 0N4

*Your file*    *Votre référence*

*Our file*    *Notre référence*

THE AUTHOR HAS GRANTED AN  
IRREVOCABLE NON-EXCLUSIVE  
LICENCE ALLOWING THE NATIONAL  
LIBRARY OF CANADA TO  
REPRODUCE, LOAN, DISTRIBUTE OR  
SELL COPIES OF HIS/HER THESIS BY  
ANY MEANS AND IN ANY FORM OR  
FORMAT, MAKING THIS THESIS  
AVAILABLE TO INTERESTED  
PERSONS.

L'AUTEUR A ACCORDE UNE LICENCE  
IRREVOCABLE ET NON EXCLUSIVE  
PERMETTANT A LA BIBLIOTHEQUE  
NATIONALE DU CANADA DE  
REPRODUIRE, PRETER, DISTRIBUER  
OU VENDRE DES COPIES DE SA  
THESE DE QUELQUE MANIERE ET  
SOUS QUELQUE FORME QUE CE SOIT  
POUR METTRE DES EXEMPLAIRES DE  
CETTE THESE A LA DISPOSITION DES  
PERSONNE INTERESSEES.

THE AUTHOR RETAINS OWNERSHIP  
OF THE COPYRIGHT IN HIS/HER  
THESIS. NEITHER THE THESIS NOR  
SUBSTANTIAL EXTRACTS FROM IT  
MAY BE PRINTED OR OTHERWISE  
REPRODUCED WITHOUT HIS/HER  
PERMISSION.

L'AUTEUR CONSERVE LA PROPRIETE  
DU DROIT D'AUTEUR QUI PROTEGE  
SA THESE. NI LA THESE NI DES  
EXTRAITS SUBSTANTIELS DE CELLE-  
CI NE DOIVENT ETRE IMPRIMES OU  
AUTREMENT REPRODUITS SANS SON  
AUTORISATION.

ISBN 0-612-01466-5

Canada

Name Andrew John Lindsay

Dissertation Abstracts International is arranged by broad, general subject categories. Please select the one subject which most nearly describes the content of your dissertation. Enter the corresponding four-digit code in the spaces provided.

CANADIAN HISTORY

SUBJECT TERM

0334 U·M·I  
SUBJECT CODE

## Subject Categories

### THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

#### COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Architecture ..... 0729  
Art History ..... 0377  
Cinema ..... 0900  
Dance ..... 0378  
Fine Arts ..... 0357  
Information Science ..... 0723  
Journalism ..... 0391  
Library Science ..... 0399  
Mass Communications ..... 0708  
Music ..... 0413  
Speech Communication ..... 0459  
Theater ..... 0465

#### EDUCATION

General ..... 0515  
Administration ..... 0514  
Adult and Continuing ..... 0516  
Agricultural ..... 0517  
Art ..... 0273  
Bilingual and Multicultural ..... 0282  
Business ..... 0688  
Community College ..... 0275  
Curriculum and Instruction ..... 0727  
Early Childhood ..... 0518  
Elementary ..... 0524  
Finance ..... 0277  
Guidance and Counseling ..... 0519  
Health ..... 0680  
Higher ..... 0745  
History of ..... 0520  
Home Economics ..... 0278  
Industrial ..... 0521  
Language and Literature ..... 0279  
Mathematics ..... 0280  
Music ..... 0522  
Philosophy of ..... 0998  
Physical ..... 0523

Psychology ..... 0525  
Reading ..... 0535  
Religious ..... 0527  
Sciences ..... 0714  
Secondary ..... 0533  
Social Sciences ..... 0534  
Sociology of ..... 0340  
Special ..... 0529  
Teacher Training ..... 0530  
Technology ..... 0710  
Tests and Measurements ..... 0288  
Vocational ..... 0747

#### LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS

Language  
General ..... 0679  
Ancient ..... 0289  
Linguistics ..... 0290  
Modern ..... 0291  
Literature  
General ..... 0401  
Classical ..... 0294  
Comparative ..... 0295  
Medieval ..... 0297  
Modern ..... 0298  
African ..... 0316  
American ..... 0591  
Asian ..... 0305  
Canadian (English) ..... 0352  
Canadian (French) ..... 0355  
English ..... 0593  
Germanic ..... 0311  
Latin American ..... 0312  
Middle Eastern ..... 0315  
Romance ..... 0313  
Slavic and East European ..... 0314

#### PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

Philosophy ..... 0422  
Religion  
General ..... 0318  
Biblical Studies ..... 0321  
Clergy ..... 0319  
History of ..... 0320  
Philosophy of ..... 0322  
Theology ..... 0469

#### SOCIAL SCIENCES

American Studies ..... 0323  
Anthropology  
Archaeology ..... 0324  
Cultural ..... 0326  
Physical ..... 0327  
Business Administration  
General ..... 0310  
Accounting ..... 0272  
Banking ..... 0770  
Management ..... 0454  
Marketing ..... 0338  
Canadian Studies ..... 0385  
Economics  
General ..... 0501  
Agricultural ..... 0503  
Commerce-Business ..... 0505  
Finance ..... 0508  
History ..... 0509  
Labor ..... 0510  
Theory ..... 0511  
Folklore ..... 0358  
Geography ..... 0366  
Gerontology ..... 0351  
History  
General ..... 0578

Ancient ..... 0579  
Medieval ..... 0581  
Modern ..... 0582  
Black ..... 0328  
African ..... 0331  
Asia, Australia and Oceania ..... 0332  
Canadian ..... 0334  
European ..... 0335  
Latin American ..... 0336  
Middle Eastern ..... 0333  
United States ..... 0337  
History of Science ..... 0585  
Law ..... 0398  
Political Science  
General ..... 0615  
International Law and  
Relations ..... 0616  
Public Administration ..... 0617  
Recreation ..... 0814  
Social Work ..... 0452  
Sociology  
General ..... 0626  
Criminology and Penology ..... 0627  
Demography ..... 0938  
Ethnic and Racial Studies ..... 0631  
Individual and Family  
Studies ..... 0628  
Industrial and Labor  
Relations ..... 0629  
Public and Social Welfare ..... 0630  
Social Structure and  
Development ..... 0700  
Theory and Methods ..... 0344  
Transportation ..... 0709  
Urban and Regional Planning ..... 0999  
Women's Studies ..... 0453

### THE SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

#### BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Agriculture  
General ..... 0473  
Agronomy ..... 0285  
Animal Culture and  
Nutrition ..... 0475  
Animal Pathology ..... 0476  
Food Science and  
Technology ..... 0359  
Forestry and Wildlife ..... 0478  
Plant Culture ..... 0479  
Plant Pathology ..... 0480  
Plant Physiology ..... 0817  
Range Management ..... 0777  
Wood Technology ..... 0746  
Biology  
General ..... 0306  
Anatomy ..... 0287  
Biostatistics ..... 0308  
Botany ..... 0309  
Cell ..... 0379  
Ecology ..... 0329  
Entomology ..... 0353  
Genetics ..... 0369  
Immunology ..... 0793  
Limnology ..... 0410  
Microbiology ..... 0307  
Molecular ..... 0317  
Neuroscience ..... 0416  
Oceanography ..... 0433  
Physiology ..... 0821  
Radiation ..... 0778  
Veterinary Science ..... 0472  
Zoology  
Biophysical  
General ..... 0786  
Medical ..... 0760  
EARTH SCIENCES  
Biogeochemistry ..... 0425  
Geochemistry ..... 0996

Geodesy ..... 0370  
Geology ..... 0372  
Geophysics ..... 0373  
Hydrology ..... 0388  
Mineralogy ..... 0411  
Paleobotany ..... 0345  
Paleoecology ..... 0426  
Paleontology ..... 0418  
Paleozoology ..... 0985  
Palynology ..... 0427  
Physical Geography ..... 0368  
Physical Oceanography ..... 0415

#### HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Environmental Sciences ..... 0768  
Health Sciences  
General ..... 0566  
Audiology ..... 0300  
Chemotherapy ..... 0992  
Dentistry ..... 0567  
Education ..... 0350  
Hospital Management ..... 0769  
Human Development ..... 0758  
Immunology ..... 0982  
Medicine and Surgery ..... 0564  
Mental Health ..... 0347  
Nursing ..... 0569  
Nutrition ..... 0570  
Obstetrics and Gynecology ..... 0380  
Occupational Health and  
Therapy ..... 0354  
Ophthalmology ..... 0381  
Pathology ..... 0571  
Pharmacology ..... 0419  
Pharmacy ..... 0572  
Physical Therapy ..... 0382  
Public Health ..... 0573  
Radiology ..... 0574  
Recreation ..... 0575

Speech Pathology ..... 0460  
Taxology ..... 0383  
Home Economics ..... 0386

#### PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Pure Sciences  
Chemistry  
General ..... 0485  
Agricultural ..... 0749  
Analytical ..... 0486  
Biochemistry ..... 0487  
Inorganic ..... 0488  
Nuclear ..... 0738  
Organic ..... 0490  
Pharmaceutical ..... 0491  
Physical ..... 0494  
Polymer ..... 0495  
Radiation ..... 0754  
Mathematics ..... 0405  
Physics  
General ..... 0605  
Acoustics ..... 0986  
Astronomy and  
Astrophysics ..... 0606  
Atmospheric Science ..... 0608  
Atomic ..... 0748  
Electronics and Electricity ..... 0607  
Elementary Particles and  
High Energy ..... 0798  
Fluid and Plasma ..... 0759  
Molecular ..... 0609  
Nuclear ..... 0610  
Optics ..... 0752  
Radiation ..... 0756  
Solid State ..... 0611  
Statistics ..... 0463  
Applied Sciences  
Applied Mechanics ..... 0346  
Computer Science ..... 0984

Engineering  
General ..... 0537  
Aerospace ..... 0538  
Agricultural ..... 0539  
Automotive ..... 0540  
Biomedical ..... 0541  
Chemical ..... 0542  
Civil ..... 0543  
Electronics and Electrical ..... 0544  
Heat and Thermodynamics ..... 0348  
Hydraulic ..... 0545  
Industrial ..... 0546  
Marine ..... 0547  
Materials Science ..... 0794  
Mechanical ..... 0548  
Metallurgy ..... 0743  
Mining ..... 0551  
Nuclear ..... 0552  
Packaging ..... 0549  
Petroleum ..... 0765  
Sanitary and Municipal ..... 0554  
System Science ..... 0790  
Geotechnology ..... 0428  
Operations Research ..... 0796  
Plastics Technology ..... 0795  
Textile Technology ..... 0994

#### PSYCHOLOGY

General ..... 0621  
Behavioral ..... 0384  
Clinical ..... 0622  
Developmental ..... 0620  
Experimental ..... 0623  
Industrial ..... 0624  
Personality ..... 0625  
Physiological ..... 0989  
Psychobiology ..... 0349  
Psychometrics ..... 0632  
Social ..... 0451



ABSTRACT

This thesis was undertaken to establish when professional boxing declined in Toronto, and how and why it happened. It was hoped that answering this question would provide insight into the nature of Toronto, the nature of boxing, and the relationship between the two.

It was determined that boxing enjoyed a golden age of popularity between 1920 and 1939, with the sport rapidly declining thereafter. This popularity was dependent on the support of Toronto's dominant British population. This support was only given through a reinterpretation of boxing by mainstream Toronto. A sport with a long-standing reputation of being crude and dishonest was redefined as a pursuit consistent with the agenda of Toronto's establishment. That agenda insisted that sport be about the building of character and other values that made for good British subjects.

The 1940's saw mainstream Toronto no longer willing to look beyond boxing's blatantly unsavoury nature, a nature inextricably linked to its commercial roots. Boxing's unregulated nature, notwithstanding the efforts of the Ontario Athletic Commission to reform the sport in its small corner of the professional boxing world, made it inherently prone to improprieties. Recognizing this, Toronto's British population withdrew its support and local boxing has steadily declined ever since. Paradoxically, Toronto has been receptive to

occasional closed circuit television broadcasts of American matches, a continuation of a long-standing trend whereby Toronto has been willing to put aside its moral reservations about the sport when the opportunity existed to watch world-class American boxers. The city has become content with whatever boxing its neighbours to the south would provide, undermining the likelihood of a rebirth of local boxing.

DEDICATION

This thesis, the second best thing to happen to me in Windsor,  
is dedicated to Susan, the best thing to happen to me in  
Windsor.



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my tremendous gratitude to my parents, Mary Lois and Robert Alan, outstanding educators both, who instilled in me a great love of knowledge and learning for its own sake, and provided occasional financial support for my studies in Windsor.

I wish to extend my appreciation to my thesis advisor, Dr. Alan Metcalfe, for the essential contribution of his high standards, rigorous methodology, and unparalleled insight into Canadian Sport History.

My warm personal thanks to Dr. Victoria Paraschak for the sociological insight she has shared with me, as well as her friendship and moral support over the past two years.

A big thank you to Dr. Lawrence Kulisek for his willingness to be a part of this thesis, the contribution of his traditional narrative historical perspective, and his openness in sharing his perspective of Canadian History.

The assistance of the always professional Leddy Library staff, particularly the Inter-Library Loan Department, the Reference Help Centre, and the Reserve Reading Room staff, was an invaluable contribution to this thesis.

Early in this endeavour, the willingness of several Canadian boxing "insiders" gave me needed focus to pursue a

specific question. Vince Bagnato, Johnny Tuck, Jack Duggan, and Dr. Brian Walls, all fine gentlemen connected to the sport of professional boxing, willingly gave their time to share their memories and answer my questions about the fight game. Thanks again, guys!

Mr. Ken Hayashi, the Deputy Athletic Commissioner for the Province of Ontario, was very hospitable in allowing me to peruse the Ontario Athletic Commission records pertaining to boxing. Equally helpful was Mike Cash of the Ontario Freedom of Information Department, who advised me as how to best pursue boxing records at the Provincial Archives.

A final thank you to Joanne Fear, Administrative Assistant for the Faculty of Human Kinetics, for the hundreds of favours she has done for myself and the other Graduate students over the years.

I have met many outstanding people, and made numerous lifetime friends amongst the Faculty, Staff, Graduate, and Undergraduate programmes here in Human Kinetics, people who have enriched my life and provided many great memories. Best wishes for a bright and happy future to everyone. I hope to see you all again before long.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract. . . . .	iii
Dedication . . . . .	v
Acknowledgements . . . . .	vi
Chapter 1 . . . . .	1
The Question . . . . .	1
Chapter 2 . . . . .	15
Toronto Embraces Boxing, 1920-39 . . . . .	15
Chapter 3 . . . . .	83
Down for the Count, 1940-93 . . . . .	83
Chapter 4 . . . . .	132
Conclusions . . . . .	132
Selected Bibliography . . . . .	137
Primary Sources . . . . .	137
Books . . . . .	137
Magazine and Journal Articles . . . . .	137
Newspapers . . . . .	137
Secondary Sources . . . . .	137
Books . . . . .	137
Magazine and Journal Articles . . . . .	140
Newspaper Articles . . . . .	141
Theses and Dissertations . . . . .	142
Proceedings . . . . .	141
Government Documents . . . . .	142
Appendix A . . . . .	143
Appendix B . . . . .	149
Appendix C . . . . .	153
Vita Auctoris . . . . .	163

## Chapter 1

### The Question

When and how did professional boxing lose popularity in Toronto? For modern-day Torontonians, as well as boxing fans everywhere, it may be surprising that professional boxing once thrived in Toronto. Most Toronto sport fans would be too young to remember the sport enjoying passionate support in their hometown. Professional boxing is today little more than a rumour on the Toronto sports scene, a memory for those old enough to have cheered Toronto boxers in previous eras.

Presently, the pages of Toronto's daily newspapers have virtually no mention of local boxing, a development that speaks of a complete absence of boxing or a lack of media interest in reporting what little activity exists. Toronto's baseball, hockey, and football teams monopolize a huge portion of the local sport pages, but only one professional boxing event in Toronto could be confirmed in 1993<sup>1</sup>. Professional boxers who call Toronto home are virtually unknown and elite boxers seemingly non-existent. Professional boxing shows are rare in Toronto and those that do take place are always staged in small venues in front of several hundred spectators. Toronto has not seen a world title bout in a decade, a fight

---

<sup>1</sup>The Toronto Star, March 19, 1993. In addition to this one show, there were apparently one or two more in 1993. The Deputy Athletic Commissioner of Ontario confirmed over the phone there were either two or three cards total in Toronto during this year.

which saw Toronto fighter Nicky Furlano challenge for the championship in front of a mostly empty Varsity Stadium<sup>2</sup>.

Such was not always the case. Toronto was once home to more than 50 boxing clubs where young pugilists could hone their skills<sup>3</sup>. Toronto newspapers devoted extensive coverage to boxing, keeping their readers constantly informed about upcoming shows and local boxers<sup>4</sup>. A world flyweight boxing champion, Frenchy Belanger, called Toronto home in the late 1920's<sup>5</sup>. At times between the wars, Toronto boxing fans were treated to more than two shows per month. Boxing cards were held in Toronto's largest venues, including the Canadian National Exhibition Coliseum, the Mutual Street Arena, and Maple Leaf Gardens. Toronto boxers were often Canadian champions or top contenders, occasionally being world-calibre. Many were nurtured through the local amateur ranks and clubs. Others came to Toronto from elsewhere to fight, and stayed because boxing was more lucrative in the Queen City. For example, a 1930's Toronto bantamweight, Baby Yack, earned

---

<sup>2</sup>The Globe and Mail, May 22, 1985.

<sup>3</sup>Batten, J. (1971). Champions: Great Figures in Canadian Sport. Toronto: New Press, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>Luftspring, S. & Swarbrick, B. (1975). Call Me Sammy. Scarborough: Prentice Hall, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup>Goldman, H. G. (1984). 1984 Ring Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia. New York: The Ring Magazine, p. 895.

\$5,000 and \$8,500 for two important bouts in the midst of the Depression<sup>6</sup>!

These fundamentally different pictures of the relationship between professional boxing and Toronto begs some obvious questions. What happened to the sport's popularity in Toronto and what factors were involved in its decline? When did the decline begin? Was it a gradual deterioration or a sudden drop-off from which the sport never recovered? Was there more than one decline punctuated by recoveries in boxing's presence? Why would this sport disappear in Toronto? Did professional boxing lose its supply of athletes? It has been assumed that the health of professional boxing, like other sports, has been closely intertwined with its amateur counterpart. The belief that the professionals need to be fed by the amateurs presupposes the very existence of professional prize fighting in Canada<sup>7</sup>. Did amateur boxing decline at some point in time, crippling the professional game?

Given that boxing has been referred to as "the last overtly racist professional sport"<sup>8</sup>, the possibility exists that its disappearance may have been linked with Toronto's racial dynamics. Could the vanishing of boxing have been the

---

<sup>6</sup>Christie, J. (1990). Flesh and Blood: A Journey Into the Heart of Boxing. Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. , p. 104.

<sup>8</sup>Brunt, S. (1987). Mean Business: The Creation of Shawn O'Sullivan. Markham: Penguin, p. 24.

result of a change in the ethnicity of its competitors or spectators, or some combination of the two? Perhaps an ethnic group or groups in Toronto that once lent critical support to the sport lost interest and moved on to the patronage of other sports.

Sport scholars and boxing writers have suggested Canada's relative prosperity as a nation has inhibited the sport. It has been suggested that professional boxing tends not to flourish in affluent societies<sup>9</sup>. With regard to Canada specifically, it has been stated that our nation's prosperity allows the majority of young, male athletes the luxury of trying their hand at hockey, football or baseball instead, while the lower classes have always produced the most professional boxers in North America<sup>10</sup>. Another boxing writer concurs, stating the sport has always belonged to the poor<sup>11</sup>. Can it be convincingly argued that Toronto's standard of living improved dramatically over the past 70 years so as to make participation in boxing a necessary pursuit for fewer and fewer young men?

Could the sport have simply declined because Torontonians have increasingly enjoyed a wider range of entertainments?

---

<sup>9</sup>Howell, N. & Howell, M. L. (1969). Sports and Games in Canadian Life: 1700 to the Present. Toronto: MacMillan, p. 335.

<sup>10</sup>Brunt, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup>Hauser, T. (1986). The Black Lights: Inside the World of Professional Boxing. Toronto: McGraw Hill, p. 13.

With American professional boxing, the advent of television has been suggested to have had a negative effect on the sport's presence<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps the arrival of television in the homes of Torontonians had a similar detrimental effect. Medical concerns about the safety of the sport, coupled with a growing awareness of the sport's link to organized crime, have been cited as crucial factors in its loss of popularity in the 1950's<sup>13</sup>.

What happened to professional boxing in Toronto? To investigate this matter, one must consider the existing history of professional boxing in Toronto. The earliest evidence of professional boxing shows taking place in the Queen City, emerges in 1897. A group of enterprising Toronto men formed an athletic body, the Olympic Boxing Club, asked for and received permission from the Toronto Chief of Police, then staged a card of matches on Christmas Eve in front of 300 onlookers at Yonge Street's Albert Hall<sup>14</sup>. Many more shows followed. The career fight records of world champion boxers alone uncovers no fewer than twenty-three more shows taking

---

<sup>12</sup>Sammons, J. (1988). Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society. Urbana: University of Illinois, p. 130.

<sup>13</sup>Donnelly, P. (1988). Sport as a Site for Popular Resistance. In R. Gruneau, Popular Cultures and Political Practises. Toronto: Garamond, pp. 69-82.

<sup>14</sup>The Globe, December 13 & 27, 1897.



place in Toronto between 1897 and 1920<sup>15</sup>. These matches represent only those events in which a future world champion was involved. There undoubtedly were others. Twenty-one of the twenty-three cards were written about the day after in The Globe. The shows had fairly impressive crowds ranging from 800 to 3,000, were staged by several Toronto athletic clubs (Toronto, Queen City, Olympic, Personal, and Crescent A.C.), and took place at several Toronto venues, including (among others) the Island Stadium, Mutual Street Rink, and Massey Hall. The crowd figures and locations indicate that professional boxing had come a long way from the days in which small crowds gathered in secluded fields to watch bouts that could end at any moment with the arrival of the police<sup>16</sup>.

Clearly, an interest in professional boxing existed in Toronto at the turn of the century. There is no indication that any party other than athletic clubs staged professional boxing cards in Toronto. Two sources have indicated that such

---

<sup>15</sup>Goldman listed former world champions as having fought in Toronto on the following dates: October 2nd, 1897 (p. 724), January 22nd (787), December 10th (657) and 24th (657), 1898, January 28th (725), March 31st (850) and April 8th (658), 1899, May 24th (657) and June 19th (657), 1900, May 24th (657) and September 28th (657), 1901, November 28th (787), 1903, June 15th (853) and 19th (660), September 5th (591), October 5th (664) and November 30th (727), 1911, April 19th (554), 1916, May 19th (667) and September 3rd (731), January 23rd, 1918 (669), January ? 1919 (733), January 1st, 1920 (554).

The Globe wrote about each of the above matches, with the exception of the January 1919 show (which could not be confirmed), the day after the date cited above by The Ring.

<sup>16</sup>Wise, S. & Fisher, D. (1974). Canada's Sporting Heroes: Don Mills: General Publishing, p. 128.

clubs enjoyed the exclusive sanction of legal and political authorities in Canada to hold such events. One of them states that private clubs successfully used legal loopholes to circumvent federal legislation barring public prizefighting<sup>17</sup>. The other informed that matches taking place behind the doors of "legitimate" boxing establishments were far less likely to result in legal intervention than those staged at logging and mining camps<sup>18</sup>. Private athletic clubs in Canadian urban centres had by that time always been a forum for those with considerable wealth, membership being beyond the social and economic reach of the majority of Canadians<sup>19</sup>. That the promotion of boxing shows was limited to a privileged few makes any attempt to gauge boxing's popularity at this time problematic. Any quantitative measure used to determine the sport's presence would only reveal a limited picture of boxing's appeal. It seems unlikely a wide range of Toronto society would have been in attendance in these posh, typically exclusive venues. Indeed, the June 15, 1911 Crescent Club show was witnessed by 800 "members" at the Island Stadium<sup>20</sup>. A far more meaningful beginning point for

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. , p. 127.

<sup>18</sup>Christie, pp. 49-50.

<sup>19</sup>Metcalfe, A. (1987). Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Play in Canada. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup>The Globe, June 16, 1911.

analysis of the change of boxing's popularity in Toronto can be found after the First World War.

On June 4th, 1920, the Ontario government brought professional boxing under regulatory control with the passage of the Athletics Control Act<sup>21</sup>. From this day forward, there would never again be any legal ambiguity pertaining to professional boxing. Boxing shows could be promoted by anyone with a valid license, regardless of club affiliation. Admittedly, who possessed a license was still a decision made exclusively by the government, specifically the newly formed Ontario Athletic Commission (OAC), but a new precedent had been set. The right to stage shows was there for the asking by anyone who filled out the appropriate application form. After 1920, a more accurate picture of boxing's popularity can be attained because legal sanction had brought the sport out in the open in Toronto society, in contrast to those days when special, exclusive permission had to be arranged with the local police.

Another reason this year makes a credible beginning point for a study of professional boxing's changing popularity in Toronto, is that it was then that the sport enjoyed an unprecedented appeal in Canada. The First World War years have been identified as the time when boxing acquired more

---

<sup>21</sup>The Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1927, Volume 3, Chapter 261, Section 1, pp. 3348-51. Published in Toronto by the Ontario Press Limited.

elitist approval than ever before<sup>22</sup>. The decision of the Ontario Government, after 53 years, to finally sanction the sport, suggests boxing had become extremely popular. It is unlikely the province's legislators would have done so if the sport's popularity was ebbing at this time.

A reformist movement emerged in Canada during the first world war. By this time, the acceptance of boxing, as a manly art was so high that even the most puritanical reformers did not campaign for its abolition. Instead, the reformers sought regulation and control<sup>23</sup>.

Professional boxing in Toronto obviously did not emerge from a vacuum on June 4th, 1920. Boxing events were a common occurrence in pre-1920 Toronto, took place in a variety of settings, and often attracted crowds of more than a thousand people. The sport existed, and had some degree of popularity for many years before the creation of the regulatory body known as the Ontario Athletic Commission. Indeed, less than two weeks before the passage of the Act, over 12,000 (!) Torontonians attended a world title match at Exhibition Park between England's Jimmy Wilde and American Patty Wallace<sup>24</sup>. The year in which the sport was first sanctioned by the political establishment, however, stands as the most

---

<sup>22</sup>Wise & Fisher, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. , p. 131.

<sup>24</sup>The Globe, May 24, 1920.

meaningful beginning point for the historian attempting to trace a change in boxing's popularity in this city.

Professional boxing is not completely extinct in Toronto at present; a small number of promotions are still being staged<sup>25</sup>. The changing popularity of the sport, therefore, must be thought of as ongoing, with the possibility still existing, no matter how remote, of the sport rebounding in popularity. Since a temporal end point had to be chosen for this thesis, 1993, the last complete year of newspaper coverage, was selected.

This inquiry hinges around the concept of popularity, specifically the popularity of a particular professional sport in a given locale, over a specific time frame. As straightforward as the concept of popularity may seem, it is essential to remember a universal interpretation of the word is not likely to be found that can be applied to any specific activity. One could identify "popularity" many ways. Does the word imply an extremely intense loyalty on the part of a limited portion of the population, or a modest appeal with a clear majority? Focussing more specifically on professional sports, is there any one essential criterion that absolutely proves whether a sport is or is not popular? Identifying quantitative factors that would steer the historian to a closer understanding of professional boxing's popularity in

---

<sup>25</sup> The Deputy Athletic Commissioner for Ontario informed that there were no more than three professional shows staged in Toronto in 1993.

Toronto between 1920 and 1993, does not seem difficult. Criteria like the number of active professional boxers calling Toronto their home, the records of boxers and number of world champions, the size of crowds in attendance at Toronto boxing events, the number of boxing shows, and the nature and amount of media coverage given the sport, all figure to be linked with the popularity of boxing at any given time. Much more difficult, however, is determining which of the above are merely indications of the sport's popularity, and which are determining factors affecting that popularity. One would logically expect that boxing was more popular in a year in which there were 30 events than one in which there was only 10, in a year with a total of 100,000 spectators than one with 20,000 fans. Such quantitative measurements are easy enough to implement and constitute an essential part of this thesis, namely the descriptive aspect of professional boxing's decline in Toronto. A much more abstract dilemma involves asking why there should have been fewer shows and spectators over time. What could have happened in the history of a sport, a city, and the greater society around it, that could explain boxing's declining presence in the Queen City? Why should boxing have largely disappeared from the Toronto sporting scene? The attempt to answer this question will undoubtedly be facilitated by considering why any professional sport loses popularity, and the ultimate answer will add insight to our

understanding of the changing appeal of other professional sports in other cities.

The number of boxing events taking place in Toronto is a valid indicator of the sport's appeal there, as are the number of spectators and average crowds in attendance over time and relative to the rest of Canada, the venues used by promoters, the quality and origin of boxers, and the portrayal of the sport by the media. It is not known which combination of the above factors testifies to the greatest popularity. For example, which of the following scenarios portrays boxing in a more popular light: a year in which five shows take place at Maple Leaf Gardens with an average of 5,000 fans, or a year in which 25 events averaging 1,000 spectators took place at much smaller venues? Both scenarios involve a total attendance of 25,000 fans. Would it be more indicative of boxing being a popular sport in this city if there were 30 known active Toronto boxers all performing regularly in their hometown, or 60 boxers with only 20 fighting in Toronto? What if there were only a handful of boxers and boxing matches in a given year, but the local media devoted more coverage to what little boxing activity there was than to any other sport in Toronto? The number of combinations of scenarios is seemingly endless. There is no ready answer for the question of what the most important measure of popularity is, and no attempt will be made to operationally define one for this thesis. It is expected that by the end of this thesis, however, a better

understanding will be had of what the most important factor or factors are that define the popularity of boxing. It is expected that some combination of the above hypothesized variables, and likely some others not considered, will emerge as the truest measure of the sport's popularity.

Such variables were measured by researching a Toronto newspaper, The Globe and Mail <sup>26</sup>, a boxing periodical The Ring Magazine <sup>27</sup>, and the records of the Ontario Athletic

---

<sup>26</sup>The Toronto newspaper that served as the primary data source for this thesis will be referred to in the text as the GM, it being acknowledged that it was known The Globe until 1937 when it amalgamated with another Toronto daily to become The Globe and Mail. A thorough content analysis of this newspaper's sports section was done for 10 complete years at eight-year intervals to compile a data base quantitatively tracing the disappearance of the sport in Toronto. The first 10 years analyzed were 1921, 1929, 1937, 1945, 1953, 1961, 1969, 1977, 1985, and 1993. On the basis of what trends were identified in these years, educated guesses were made as to what eras represented critical stages in the change of boxing's popularity over time, and additional years were chosen for analysis. They were 1941, 1946, 1949, 1957, 1965, and 1973, as well as partial analyses of 1925 and 1933. This made for a total data base of more than sixteen complete years and over 5,000 Globe and Mail issues examined.

<sup>27</sup>The Ring Magazine will be referred to in this thesis as The Ring. This magazine is a monthly American publication, in print since 1922. For most of its history, The Ring included fairly detailed reports of boxing news from numerous locales around the world. For much of this time span, a correspondent from Toronto wrote accounts of the state of boxing in that city. The reports were fairly detailed, providing first-hand information about recent boxing cards, the boxer's hometowns, the attendance, purses, and overall quality of the promotions. It was hoped that a thorough content analysis of The Ring would provide a fairly accurate picture of the boxing activity in Toronto on a year-by-year basis. Additionally, such reporters offered their views as to the popularity of boxing in the city, and their perceptions as to why it was thriving or declining. These opinions were expected to provide insight into the sport's decline. Every issue from 1922 to 1991 was researched, with the exception of 1961 and four or five from the late 1980's, making for a total data base of The Ring of well over 800 issues.



Commission<sup>28</sup>. In addition to these three primary sources, a variety of others were considered for whatever insight they could offer pertaining to professional boxing, professional sport in general, and the history of the City of Toronto and its people during this time span. These secondary reading sources provided the analytical framework within which the decline of boxing could be interpreted, to complement the descriptive information gleaned from the primary sources.

---

well over 800 issues.

<sup>28</sup>Since the Ontario Athletic Commission has always been, since 1920, the only government body responsible for regulating the sport in the province, whatever records it kept over the 1920-93 time span would represent the only official government documentation of professional boxing's presence in Toronto. The Commission has been responsible for the issuance of licenses for boxers, managers and promoters, and it was hoped that such data could provide insight as to the sport's decline in the above city. Additionally, it was hoped that documentation like letters internal memorandums might reveal the government's opinion as to whether the sport was thriving or declining.

## Chapter 2

### Toronto Embraces Boxing, 1920-39

Professional boxing found a fertile home in Toronto between the wars. For a brief time, the necessary ingredients were in place to make the sport thrive in the Queen City. Professional boxing was a "big deal" to fans and media alike. Never before or afterward was there as large an audience in Toronto willing to pay to see professional pugilists demonstrate their skills. Prior to 1920 in Toronto, the sport had always existed on the legal margins of society. With professional boxing cards outlawed, or the right to stage them restricted to a very narrow class of Toronto society, there was little opportunity for the sport to gain a regular foothold. With the legalization of professional boxing through the creation of the Ontario Athletic Commission in 1920, a major obstacle to the sport was removed. The Ontario government gave its approval to professional boxing, ending decades of ambiguity as to its legal status.

The sanction given boxing, however, was given neither freely nor absolutely. The city's moral climate, shaped by a socially, politically and economically dominant British majority, was not conducive to the nature of professional boxing. A sport that had always been about money, had always been a nakedly commercial spectacle, and had for decades

thrived most successfully in the United States, became even more of a big business in "the roaring twenties". After the First World War, Torontonians pursued a lifestyle similar in many ways to that of their neighbour to the south, enthusiastically patronizing entertainment spectacles like boxing events more than ever before to (in addition to other motivations) forget the horrors of the First World War. Legal authorities in America relented in the early 1920's and sanctioned a sport that had already enjoyed considerable popularity even though it was against the law<sup>29</sup>. That a largely British city like Toronto would emulate this trend was surprising, for its social and political elite in the 1920's was still holding onto assumptions about sport that had long since been abandoned by thousands of local fans.

The Ontario government, the Toronto elite, and the Toronto media embraced professional boxing, a sport with numerous characteristics that ran contrary to some of their most cherished values handed down from Britain. This embrace, however, had strings attached. It was only by the reinterpretation of the sport as a pursuit consistent with the outlook of Toronto's dominant class, that professional boxing was "allowed" to become as popular as it did in the 1920's and 1930's. Boxing became a respectable, manly, gentlemanly, and

---

<sup>29</sup>The Walker Act was the legislation sanctioning professional boxing in New York, the first state in the nation to do so. Other states quickly followed. See Bernard, G. C. (1952). The Morality of Prizefighting. Washington: Catholic University, p. 43.

patriotic activity in the eyes of those with the power to shape the meaning of sport in Toronto, and this new image facilitated, both directly and indirectly, a much greater presence for professional boxing in the city.

For a brief time, then, professional boxing was enthusiastically patronized by both the well-off (middle and upper class Anglos who had traditionally looked upon the sport with disdain) and the city's working class, both British and other ethnic groups, who had previously supported professional boxing in Toronto. These two groups saw very different things looking at the same sport. Whereas the latter liked what it has always liked about the sport, the drama and excitement of elite boxers in combat, the former viewed professional boxing in a manner consistent with amateur principles. The interpretation of professional boxing based on amateur assumptions by the OAC, a local newspaper, and Toronto's well-to-do was the critical factor pushing the sport to an unprecedented appeal. This ability and willingness on the part of British Toronto to disassociate boxing from its seedy, uncivilized past image, would ultimately prove to be transitory. The spilling over of an American, commercial mindset shaping boxing was a huge and irreversible trend, one that would make the attempt by British Toronto to "sanitize" the sport to its liking wishful thinking. Between the wars, however, the "thumbs up" given boxing in general (and professional boxing in particular) by the British middle and

upper class, made for a golden age for the sport in Toronto.

On November 28, 1927, Toronto boxing fans witnessed the proudest moment in the sport's history in this city. Toronto's only world champion professional boxer was crowned, when Albert (Frenchy) Belanger won the World Flyweight title from American Frankie Genaro. More than 12,000 spectators cheered their hero to victory in the Canadian National Exhibition Coliseum. Belanger's triumph stands as a symbol of the sport's golden age in Toronto, when boxing was more popular than ever before or since. From 1920, when boxing was first legalized, to 1939, when Canada entered a war during which the sport fell into an irreversible decline, professional boxing cards happened frequently in Toronto's largest stadiums. Many talented boxers competed there, local ones becoming idolized celebrities. The GM covered boxing extensively. The sport was truly a "big deal" in the Queen City.

In the late 1920's, when Belanger captured his world crown, crowds of 10,000 were not uncommon when he, or his local rival, Steve Rocco, fought. In addition to Belanger's championship crowds of 11,000-12,000 (estimated), 10,241, 8,000, and 9,000 attended to see these fighters contest Dominion or World title fights in 1927-8<sup>30</sup>. Typically, Torontonians responded to boxing promotions between the wars

---

<sup>30</sup>The Globe, November 28th & December 19th, 1927. February 6th, June 5th & July 23rd, 1928.

with crowds of 4,000-8,000<sup>31</sup>. Such large crowds necessitated the renting of Toronto's largest sport venues, with the Coliseum, Mutual Arena, and Maple Leaf Gardens hosting the lion's share of professional events<sup>32</sup>. Promoters were confident enough about selling tickets to consistently book these stadiums. The yearly volume of spectators at professional boxing events at times surpassed 150,000<sup>33</sup>. At this time, the Toronto Argonauts football team played only three home games yearly, making their yearly attendance miniscule in comparison<sup>34</sup>. Even the Grey Cup game did not attract significantly greater crowds than boxing. Six Toronto Grey Cup games in the 1920's averaged 9,373 spectators, a figure not greatly superior to many boxing attendances<sup>35</sup>. It is not surprising, then, that advertisements for boxing cards

---

<sup>31</sup>Fifteen of 22 Toronto crowds cited in The Ring from 1922-39 were between 4,000-8,000, as were 33 of 62 cited crowds in The Globe and Mail or Toronto Star. See appendices for A) a complete listing of crowds cited in the above newspapers in selected years between 1921 and 1993, and B) tables comparing Toronto crowds with other Canadian cities cited in The Ring from 1922-93.

<sup>32</sup>Seventeen of 28 shows cited in The Globe in 1929 were held in the Coliseum. Fifty-two of 54 cards held in 1937-8 were staged in either Maple Leaf Gardens or the Mutual Arena, the former and present homes of Toronto's professional hockey franchise.

<sup>33</sup>Twelve of 28 crowds cited in The Globe or the Toronto Star in 1929 totalled 78,700, an average (6,558) which would predict a year's total of 183,632 fans. Thirty-seven cited crowds (of 54 shows) in 1937-8 totalled 218,446 fans, predicting a two-year total of 318,813, or almost 160,000 per year.

<sup>34</sup>Curry, G. (1968). One Hundred Years of Canadian Football. Toronto: Pagurian, pp. 182-3.

<sup>35</sup>Sports Illustrated, 1992 Sports Almanac. Toronto: Little, Brown & Company, p. 135.

in the GM were sometimes larger than ones for Argo games<sup>36</sup>. Even Canada's national sport, ice hockey, did not surpass the popularity of boxing in Toronto. The Maple Leaf's yearly attendances also did not draw as many yearly spectators as professional boxing in the late 1920's<sup>37</sup>. Even when boxing declined, relatively, in the early 1930's, its crowds would have been envied by promoters in later eras<sup>38</sup>. An average of one card per month between the wars was typical, and two per month became the norm in the late 1920's and late 1930's<sup>39</sup>.

---

<sup>36</sup>The Globe, November 5, 1920.

<sup>37</sup>One reads the Leafs played 22 home games in the late 1920's in Coleman, C. L. (1969). The Trail of the Stanley Cup: 1927-46. Place of publication not cited: National Hockey League, pp. 18, 42 & 70. Another source indicates the stadium they played in only seated 8,000 fans. See Simpson, W. Hockey. In Morrow, D. (1989). A Concise History of Sport in Canada. Toronto: Oxford University, p. 203. The yearly Leaf's attendance, therefore cannot have exceeded 176,000. The projected 1929 total attendance for professional boxing was 183,633.

<sup>38</sup>The Globe, September 20, 1932, speculated the 5,000 fans at the Pladner versus Brown world title match at the Gardens was enough to encourage continued efforts to *bring boxing back into public favour* in Toronto. Crowds of 3,300, 4,953, 2,600, 2,500, 2,000, 2,000, and 1,200 (January 28, February 21, March 11 & 27, May 10 & 27 & June 20) attended professional shows from January to June, 1933. Repeated references were made in The Globe to futile efforts by local promoters to revive a sport that was dead (January 28, February 21, June 20). The seven shows and 18,553 fans in six months, however, would predict a year's total of 14 cards and 37,000 fans, numbers that would exceed the comparative figures for Toronto boxing by the 1950's.

<sup>39</sup>In 1921, The Globe reported on 15 boxing cards in Toronto: January 22, February 1 & 22, April 12, May 10, 21 & 28, July 1 & 134, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 8 & 23 & December 19. In 1929, there were 28 more: January 5 & 26, February 9 & 19, March 1, 13 & 23, April 9, 16, 23 & 30, May 14, June 1 & 25, July 30, August 20 & 27, September 4, 11, 18 & 24, October 1, 8 & 19, November 9 & 23, December 3 & 28. The year 1937 saw 25 cards: January 7 & 21, February 4 & 18, March 4, April 3, May 1 &

Toronto was one of two dominant Canadian boxing centres, along with Montreal<sup>40</sup>. Toronto boxing fans had ample opportunity to enjoy the sport. Why were there so many events and such large crowds?

Frenchy Belanger, a French-Canadian who grew up poor and victimized in Toronto's Cabbagetown ghetto<sup>41</sup>, typifies the identity of many Toronto boxers in the 1920's. Toronto was still a very British city after World War One. In 1921, British descendants accounted for more than 421,000 of the city's population of 521,000<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, Toronto was also characterized by a higher ratio of non-British immigrants than any other city in Canada<sup>43</sup>. The relationship of these two groups with boxing, and with each other, shaped boxing's popularity immensely. Toronto's ethnic minority groups occupied a markedly inferior political, economic, and

---

18, June 2 & 15, July 6 & 27, August 12 & 24, September 9 & 21, October 9 & 23, November 3, 16, 23 & 30, December 8, 15, 22 & 29. In 1938, 29 were held: January 5, 18 & 25, February 1, 8, 15 & 22, March 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29, April 12, 19 & 26, May 10, 24 & 31, June 14 & 28, July 19, August 2 & 17, September 24, October 4, November 2, 8 & 22 & December 13.

<sup>40</sup>From 1922-39, The Ring cited 24 Toronto boxing crowds totalling 177,593 fans, an average of 7,400. Twenty-seven cited Montreal crowds totalled 177,615 fans, an average of 6,578 spectators. All other Canadian cities had fewer than three crowds cited, and no crowd cited approached even the average attendance for the above two cities.

<sup>41</sup>Wise & Fisher, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup>Kilbourn, W. (1984). Toronto Remembered. Don Mills: Stoddart, p. 124.

<sup>43</sup>Goheen, P. (1970). Victorian Toronto: 1850-1900: Pattern and Process of Growth. Chicago: University of Chicago, p. 77.



social standing to that of the British population. Provincial elections in this period indicate non-"WASP-ish" Torontonians were excluded from political influence. Ontario's overwhelming support of the Conservative Party was most pronounced in Toronto, where 96 of 104 ridings contested in the first eight elections of this century voted "Tory Blue", most of them by huge electoral margins. The names of the politicians elected further indicates how Ontario and Toronto were shaped by British interests. The premiers and the M.P.P.'s in office could easily pass for the British Parliament<sup>44</sup>. As Toronto's political establishment was British in the early 1900's, so too was its economic elite. The eighteen famous Toronto Liberal supporters who actively lobbied against the federal policy of reciprocity in 1911 constituted a virtual "who's who" of the city's finance, manufacturing and trade power structure, and appeared to be almost exclusively WASP<sup>45</sup>.

---

<sup>44</sup>The Conservative Premiers were named Whitney, Hearst, Ferguson, and Henry. A sampling of Toronto's Conservative candidates between 1900 and 1930 reveals names like Bell, Crawford, Currie, Edwards, Godfrey, Hook, Murphy, Oakley, Owens, Price, Pyne, Robbins, Russell, Singer, Thompson and Wright. The Liberal candidates were equally British, men with names like Allen, Bundy, Cane, Coughlin, Farrell, Glass, Hunter, Kirby, Moss, and Smith. Found in Lewis, R. (1968). A History of Electoral Districts, Legislatures and Ministries of the Province of Ontario, 1867-1968. Toronto: Fogg (Queen's Printer), pp. 421-505.

<sup>45</sup>The 18 Toronto business moguls who opposed reciprocity were Walker, Somers, Strathy, Blaikie, Wood, White, Goldman, Somerville, Gourlay, Christie, Blain, Francis, Allen, Lash, George, Mathews, Eaton and Clark. Glazebrook, G. P. de T. (1971). The Story of Toronto. University of Toronto Press, p. 170.

Toronto's non-British population, who mostly arrived after 1900<sup>46</sup>, was outside of Toronto's mainstream. Jewish, Italian, Macedonian, and Slavic communities lived in poor, compact, self-enclosed ghettos in Toronto, living separate existences from the British population. There were at least six ghettos in 1921 Toronto, most characterized by a specific group<sup>47</sup>. The ghettos were overcrowded, with filthy streets, rising cesspools, windowless rooms, and contaminated water, a far cry from the Anglo population's typical living conditions. Neighbourhoods like the Junction (predominantly Slavish), the Henderson/Manning intersection (Italians), and Kensington Market area (Jewish) were criticized by the media and politicians, who condemned the residents for their "squalid ways"<sup>48</sup>. British Toronto's attitude toward these groups ranged from grudging tolerance to outright contempt. The routine portrayal of them by Toronto's media indicated the mistrust felt toward those who did not appear or act British.

An influx of Jews puts a worm next to the kernel of every fair city where they get a hold. They are not the material out of which to shape a people holding a national spirit. Not on the frontiers among the pioneers of plough and axe are they found, but in the cities where their low standards of life cheapen all about them... Jews of all

---

<sup>46</sup>Kilbourn, p. 124.

<sup>47</sup>Harney, R. F. & Troper, H. (1975). Toronto. Toronto: Van Nostrand & Reinhold, p. 27.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. , pp. 24-5.

countries should be discriminated against as a race by a poll tax so high that...<sup>49</sup>.

This vicious quote was not far removed from the average portrayal of the Jewish community by all four Toronto newspapers at the time. To the Anglo mind, Jews and other immigrants were associated with political agitation, slums, disease outbreaks, and were excluded from any but the most low-paying, menial, dangerous, and unsanitary jobs<sup>50</sup>. Italian men were mostly railway navvies, miners, and construction workers<sup>51</sup>. Foundries and clothing factories were other workplaces characterized by a huge presence of non-British newcomers<sup>52</sup>. The Toronto police force routinely brutalized those suspected of being politically left-wing "trouble-makers," "foreigners" or "Jews"<sup>53</sup>, the three labels often synonymous in the minds of Toronto's political and legal authorities. Mainstream Toronto seldom worried about the rights of non-Anglos being beaten to a pulp by the police for suspicion of Communist agitation, nor did they object to the 1929 police edict forbidding any public speaker in Toronto to

---

<sup>49</sup>Toronto Telegram, September 22, 1924.

<sup>50</sup>Harney & Troper, pp. 24, 53-4 & Speisman, S. (1979). The Jews of Toronto. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, p. 320.

<sup>51</sup>Iacovetta, F. (1992). Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto. Kingston: McGill-Queens Press, p. xix.

<sup>52</sup>Harney & Troper, p. 54.

<sup>53</sup>Berton, P. (1990). The Great Depression: 1929-39. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, p. 42.

speak a language other than English at a rally<sup>54</sup>! Toronto's Poles were also overrepresented in manufacturing and labour occupations, and lived lonely, isolated existences as a result of language and customs differences with the mainstream<sup>55</sup>. They, along with Macedonians and Ukrainians, were exploited to work in health-destroying dye factories and abattoirs<sup>56</sup>. Italian men were stereotyped as "culturally backward, hot-tempered, knife-wielding punks"<sup>57</sup>, and were largely employed in construction, needle and service trades, labour, and fruit retailing<sup>58</sup>. The local school system focussed on "Canadianizing" the children of the above ethnic groups, the assumption being they needed to be elevated from their own ethnic values and mores to be good citizens. Both the daily singing of "God Save the King" in the school's regular exercises<sup>59</sup>, and the following quote summarizing the ultimate goal of the public school system illustrate whose agenda ruled Toronto at this time.

The problem is simply this: take all the different nationalities, German, French, Italian, Russian and

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, pp. 42 & 76.

<sup>55</sup>Makowski, W. (1987). The Polish People in Canada: A Visual History. Montreal: Tundra, p. 92.

<sup>56</sup>Harney & Troper, p. 53.

<sup>57</sup>Iacovetta, p. 104.

<sup>58</sup>Zucchi, J. E. (1988). Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity. Kingston: Queens University Press, pp. 68-77.

<sup>59</sup>Harney & Troper, p. 110.

all the others that are sending their surplus into Canada; mix them with the Anglo-Saxon stock and produce a uniform race wherein the Anglo-Saxon peculiarities will prevail<sup>60</sup>.

With Toronto minorities living such poor, marginalized existences, it is not surprising there were many non-WASP boxers between the wars. The names of the fighters calling Toronto home in the 1920's and 1930's reveal an obvious non-British component. Italian boxers like Vince Glionna, Frankie Genovese, Joe Bagnato and Steve Rocco, Jewish fighters like Sammy Luftspring, Dave and Baby Yack, Spinny Weinraub, Joey Abrams and Harry Goldstein; and French-Canadian pugilists like Frenchy Belanger, and Ernie and Frank Barrieau, comprise a large portion of Toronto's best fighters during this era. Luftspring went one step further in his autobiography, contending that during his ring career, his boxing peers all came from Toronto's ghettoized Jewish, Italian, Irish and Slavic communities<sup>61</sup>.

Such minority boxers were undoubtedly boxing for the simple motivation of making a better living than the low-paying occupation they might otherwise have been sentenced. Boxing at that time was a game characterized by inner-city

---

<sup>60</sup>Ibid. , p. 110.

<sup>61</sup>Luftspring & Swarbrick, pp. 26-7. Although Luftspring's insistence that all boxers in his era were from ghettos seems unlikely, owing to subsequent uncovered evidence (to be discussed later) pertaining to numerous boxers with WASP-sounding names, his argument is largely plausible, given that he was a boxer who came from such an environment himself.

immigrant men, eager to make a living with their fists<sup>62</sup>. Both Luftspring and Vince Bagnato reminisce of growing up in poor ethnic communities where there were many people living in desperation. The former's parents made ends meet by running an illegal bootleg operation out of their kitchen in the midst of the Depression<sup>63</sup>. The latter, writing on behalf of a family of boxing brothers, recounts the daily pilgrimage of unemployed Italian men to his (relatively well-to-do) father's door, asking for financial assistance or a reference for a job<sup>64</sup>. Frenchy Belanger apparently had no formal education or marketable job skills to fall back on after his career ended, for he was employed as a bouncer/bartender shortly after his last fight<sup>65</sup>.

Such men provided role models for their communities, an assertion consistent with American professional boxing history. The American boxing ranks have mirrored whatever ethnic group had most recently arrived in America and occupied

---

<sup>62</sup>Harney & Troper, p. 183.

<sup>63</sup>Luftspring, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup>Bagnato, V. (1984). Half-a-Buck, Nobody and Me. Erin (Ontario): Boston Mills, p. 12.

<sup>65</sup>On p. 941 of Wise & Fisher, one learns Belanger was employed as a beer waiter in 1934. In the August, 1935 edition of The Ring, one reads that "George Fifield and Frenchy Belanger, two former Canadian champions at the welter and fly limits, are bouncers at two beer saloons in the Queen City of Toronto."

the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder<sup>66</sup>, the face of boxing changing as one group succeeded another as the most conspicuous and alien "newcomer" on the margin on society, from Irish to Jewish to Italian, then Black and Latin. Boxing allowed these groups a foothold into the American economic mainstream, as well as acceptance from that country's WASP majority. Such groups pulled their youth out of boxing as soon as it had served its purpose of facilitating sufficient independence and social and economic attainment. Assuming the harsh plight of Toronto's minorities was similar, the success of the Rocco's, Belanger's, and Yack's was clearly a source of pride for the city's Italians, French-Canadians, and Jews. These boxers earned fame and fortune for themselves and created many fans for the sport in their respective communities. When Luftspring was to fight Frankie Genovese in Maple Leaf Gardens in 1937, the Italian and Jewish communities took a passionate, partisan interest in the bout. Fights broke out in the street, the respective pride of each culture resting on the outcome<sup>67</sup>.

The hero worship of boxers by such minorities with little else to cheer for was not confined to hometown fighters. American boxers found enthusiastic cheering sections waiting

---

<sup>66</sup>Weinberg, S. K. & Arond, H. (1952). The Occupational Sub-Culture of the Boxer. American Journal of Sociology. 57(5), pp. 461-69.

<sup>67</sup>Luftspring & Swarbrick, pp. 96-7.

for them in 1930's Toronto, as Italian American Primo Carnera found.

Six thousand fans sweltered and sizzled at the Arena Gardens when the mercury skyrocketed to record marks in Canadian history, but Carnera was the attraction, and it is doubtful whether any other celebrity could have attracted a similar crowd under the conditions. Carnera received a tremendous welcome from the Italian colony. De LaSalle band met him on the outskirts of the city as he motored in from Buffalo, thousands paraded behind the "Big Parade" and his automobile. At the city hall, he was welcomed by the mayor<sup>68</sup>.

If Carnera's Toronto visit electrified the Italian population, one of Luftspring's anecdotes from the early 1930's demonstrates the Jewish community could be equally enthusiastic in celebrating their heroes from far and wide.

So he [Luftspring's manager, Doc Cook] invested his own money in a fight card which featured the two Baer brothers [Americans], Max and Buddy, who were among the most popular heavyweight boxers in the world at the time... they were Jewish, and it didn't hurt the gate one bit to arrange to have the Baers and myself taking nourishment the night before the fights at Altman's Delicatessen. These days, only a student riot can get a crowd out. But back then, the world needed heroes, and Jewish heroes were a particularly special commodity. In short, thousands of people showed up outside Altman's<sup>69</sup>.

The media's coverage of professional boxing was also an indication of the ethnic dimension of boxing's popularity in Toronto. The Ring complimented the talent and performances of non-British boxers, but constantly focussed on the boxer's

---

<sup>68</sup>The Ring, September, 1931.

<sup>69</sup>Luftspring, p. 93.



ethnicity. The fight accounts of the magazines's writer illustrate a racist perception of Toronto's minorities.

"Toronto's bounding Wop, Steve Rocco, won an easy decision over Spider Ryan."

"Corporal Izzy Schwartz.... won the popular award over Frenchy Belanger.... The smart little Gothamite outboxed and outsmarted the slant-eyed, chunky French Canadian."

"For frigidness, we have to hand it to 'ice-berg'--if it is a 'hock-shop'--- we hand it to 'Goldberg'--- but if it is battlin' you've got to hand it to Jack Kid Berg..."

"Jackie Johnstone, former Canadian featherweight champion... scored brilliantly over dusky Jack Willis, of Philadelphia."

"Larry Gains, the Canadian heavyweight champion, is on his way back to Canada... The big, coloured boy is one...."

"Another stirring battle... was the six-rounder between the almond-eyed Joe Eng, Chinese-Canadian battler and Jack McGinnis, the helter-skelter sock peddler from the Emerald isle. They tore into each other recklessly, but the slant-eyed Chink received the verdict..<sup>70</sup>."

The Ring correspondent was clearly not an Italian, Chinese, French-Canadian or Black individual. As it was, the reports were written by men named Jack Jarvis and G. A. M. Tutty. Toronto newspapers were no more enlightened than The Ring in portraying minority boxers. Their racist perspective reveals the sport's appeal was partially fueled by the desire to see intraracial and interracial bouts. Luftspring claimed he received more newspaper publicity than any other Toronto public figure in the 1930's<sup>71</sup>, illustrating that local minority boxers were treated as celebrities. The nature of

---

<sup>70</sup>The Ring, June, 1928; April, 1929; June, 1930; August, 1930; March, 1931 & February, 1932.

<sup>71</sup>Luftspring & Swarbrick, p. 60.

boxing coverage, however, indicates the British population's perspective of non-Anglo fighters and fights also had an ugly side to it.

"For once, the Gentile barracking brigade will have to choose between the lesser of the two evils when Sammy Luftspring and Dave Yack, a pair of Hebes, battle for supremacy at...the Mutual Street Arena Monday night<sup>72</sup>."

Another of Luftspring's amateur bouts was written about the following way.

A real grudge battle is a fight promoter's delight! And a grudge fight between an Irishman and a Jew is his dream of heaven! Frank Tenute had an honest-to-henry grudge fight between a Celt and a son of Moses on his Elmgrove A.C. card...last night... The grudge fight was between Sammy Luftspring... and Chick McCarthy... two featherweights. I don't need to tell you which one was is the Son of Israel and which one is the Son of Erin<sup>73</sup>.

Black boxers were also written about crudely by the media. When Sam Langford returned to his native country to fight in Toronto in 1921, both the Toronto Star and the GM's writers used racist terms to describe him like gorilla, coloured, and Tar Baby<sup>74</sup>. There appeared to be fewer Black boxers who were able to compete and succeed in the sport than those belonging to the above groups. This may have been simply a reflection there was nowhere near as large a Black

---

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. , pp. 58-9. The author did not elaborate as to which of the four Toronto dailies this clipping (which he had saved in his scrapbook) came from, but emphasized it was typical of the general racist tone of local boxing newspaper coverage in the 1930's.

<sup>73</sup>Toronto Star, February 7, 1933.

<sup>74</sup>Toronto Star and The Globe, October 19, 1921.

community as the Italian and Jewish populations in Toronto at the time, and no concentrated Black ghettos as was the case with the above groups. It may also, however, have been an indication the racial climate of the time was harsher on black Torontonians generally, and aspiring black boxers specifically. There is evidence suggesting white-skinned Canadians in the early twentieth century were uneasy with the social implications of Black boxers beating White fighters. Luftspring's perspective, that white Torontonians were ambivalent toward Black boxers<sup>75</sup>, rings true when one considers the broader reality of professional boxing and race relations at the time. Most black boxers in the United States had been barred from contesting world title matches by a colour barrier since 1915, after the turbulent World Heavyweight title reign of black American Jack Johnson had outraged and terrified white Americans of various racist leanings<sup>76</sup>. Canada was similarly a place where there was considerable support for the same theory of white racial supremacy<sup>77</sup>. A match promoted to crown a White Heavyweight

---

<sup>75</sup>Luftspring, p. 26.

<sup>76</sup>Sammons, pp. 46-7 & 51.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid. , pp. 36-9. Johnson won the world crown in 1908 from a White-skinned Canadian, Tommy Burns, in Australia. This victory in particular, along with another successful defence against former White champion, James Jeffries (who had been egged on by the public to win the title back for the White race) in 1910, precipitated tremendous racial turmoil in America, with numerous deaths resulting from riots and acts of retaliation by disgruntled Whites.

Champion in the midst of Johnson's reign was held in Calgary in 1913. In that same year, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada had brought down the same colour line on amateur boxing that existed in professional boxing. The body banned interracial bouts on the grounds that "competition of whites and coloured men is not working out to the increased growth of the sport"<sup>78</sup>. Black boxers were not very welcome in Toronto professional rings either. Notwithstanding occasional appearances by foreign boxers like Black Bill and Kid Chocolate of Cuba, dark-skinned fighters were rarely signed by local promoters<sup>79</sup>. One cannot help but conclude that promoters were simply following the dictates of the prevailing racial climate. If Toronto fans were willing to pay to see black boxers often, there was no shortage of them available south of the border. Toronto had an outstanding hometown heavyweight, Larry Gains, who was the holder of the Canadian title and competed successfully against international competition but spent most of his career fighting in Europe, rather than in his hometown<sup>80</sup>. This development is

---

<sup>78</sup>Wise & Fisher, p. 129.

<sup>79</sup>In 1929, The Globe regularly published biographies, with pictures, of a feature visiting boxer fighting on the upcoming card. Almost every one was white. In 1937-8, the occasional action pictures of boxing matches in The Globe and Mail again revealed very few non-White boxers.

<sup>80</sup>The Ring: 1984 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia, p. 941. Gains fought only 18 times in Toronto, but 143 bouts elsewhere, mostly in Europe. This was in spite of the fact that he defeated two future world champions, Germany's Max Schmeling and Primo Carnera.

consistent with Saunder's assertion that white North Americans were more threatened by the potential success of elite black heavyweights than by smaller black fighters. The theory of white racial supremacy was predicated on the Heavyweight champion being caucasian<sup>81</sup>. One of the clearest indications that professional boxing's popularity in Toronto was at least partially an expression of this phenomenon was witnessed when Jack Dempsey's travelling "White Hope Tournament" came to Toronto. A crowd of 14,993 fans attended, with two thousand more turned away<sup>82</sup>. One of Toronto's largest boxing crowds ever attended a show openly promoted to ensure the World Heavyweight crown would remain in white hands.

In spite of a racist atmosphere, white ethnic minorities could and did succeed in professional boxing in Toronto between the wars. Some of Toronto's best pugilists emerged from ethnic ghettos. Boxing allowed them, and their communities, pride and acceptance in a city that largely viewed them as suspicious aliens threatening "Canadian" culture. In a city where a newspaper felt obligated in 1924 to reassure its readers it was okay to patronize a local business because it was owned by gentile Canadians and managed in Canadian interests<sup>83</sup>, it is hardly surprising that men

---

<sup>81</sup>Saunders, C. R. (1990). Sweat and Soul. Dartmouth: Lancelot Press & The Black Cultural Centre, p. 30.

<sup>82</sup>The Ring, May, 1936.

<sup>83</sup>Speisman, p. 322.

from such minority groups would be attracted to an activity that promised wealth, fame, and acceptance. In the ring, such men were not inherently inferior, the only criteria for success being hard work and physical prowess. Luftspring stated that boxing cards were one of the few events that could draw inhabitants out of their ghettos to intermingle with the majority culture<sup>84</sup>.

Few sports could have been as open to Toronto's minorities as the ring. Football was an anglo game confined to the university system and urban sporting clubs<sup>85</sup>, avenues largely off limits to non-British citizens of Toronto. Similarly, sports like tennis and golf were typically available in club settings. Jews, Italians, and other minority groups either could not afford membership for, or were barred outright from belonging to such clubs. Their lower economic status likely made ice hockey and lacrosse (and the concomitant expense of equipment) more prohibitive than for British Torontonians.

Professional boxing's popularity between the wars in Toronto was more, however, than the reflection of poor minorities elevating their social and economic status. There were at least as many, if not more, British and Irish boxers

---

<sup>84</sup>Luftspring & Swarbrick, p. 32.

<sup>85</sup>Metcalfe, p. 56.

competing in Toronto than fighters from ethnic ghettos<sup>86</sup>. Since there were also slums inhabited by Anglo-Saxon<sup>87</sup> and Irish peoples<sup>88</sup> in Toronto, one must assume that some, perhaps many of these fighters similarly emerged from poverty. Although both Scottish and Irish Torontonians were minority groups in a sense owing to their accents, and the latter group had a long history of being victimized and demeaned by their English cousins<sup>89</sup>, they did not endure the same harsh existence of routine discrimination that Italians, Jews, and

---

<sup>86</sup>Some of the boxers calling Toronto home in the 1920's and 1930's with English, Scottish, and Irish sounding names included, Adams, Barber, Bragan, Cook, Foster, Grant, Humphries, Jarvis, Joyce, McGrath, McGregor, McBeigh, McCann, McDonald, McEwan, Mitchell, Newton, O'Toole, Phillips, Pickering, Riley, Sandford, Simmons, Sinclair, Stone, Thompson, Walsh, Williams, Worth, and Young.

<sup>87</sup>Famed Canadian novelist, Hugh Garner drew many of his ideas from his own experience of growing up in the predominantly Anglo Toronto slum of Cabbagetown.

Anderson, A. (1969). An Interview with Hugh Garner. The Tamarack Review. 52, p. 26.

<sup>88</sup>Nicolson, M. W. Peasants in an Urban Society. In Harney, R. F. (1985). Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945. Toronto: Multicultural Society of Ontario, p. 54.

<sup>89</sup>Canadian newspaper cartoons routinely depicted the Irish as apelike degenerates around the turn of the century. See O'Driscoll, R. & Reynolds, L. (1988). The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada. Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, pp. 40-8. Other degogatory, racist assumptions of the Irish by English Canadians, including linkages of their arrival in Canada with increased violence and crime, can be found in the following sources. See Tucker, G. (1930/31). The Famine of Immigration to Canada, 1847. American Historical Review. 36(535) & Duncan, K. (1965). Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West. Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology. 2, pp. 19 & 33.

Slavs did<sup>90</sup>. For example, Toronto elected as mayor in 1928 a man named Sam McBride<sup>91</sup>. Two of the five men sitting on the OAC in the late 1920's were named Mulqueen and McGarry, and Toronto provincial elections included numerous candidates with Scottish or Irish-sounding names<sup>92</sup>. British Torontonians of non-English descent, therefore, were not nearly as politically and socially marginalized as the above ethnic groups. Being part of the political mainstream, however, does not preclude the existence of an impoverished working class within any dominant ethnic group. Their participation in boxing itself may be assumed (lacking any reliable way of tracing the backgrounds of 1920's boxers) to have been similarly motivated by lack of upward social mobility. The meaning imposed upon their involvement in the sport by Toronto's WASP middle and upper class, however, was likely quite different. The participation of men of English, Irish and Scottish descent in the ring had to have made it much more difficult for Toronto's elite, belonging to the same ethnic backgrounds themselves, to dismiss the sport as barbaric and uncivilized. Toronto's well-to-do and media

---

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. , p. 11.

<sup>91</sup>West, B. (1967). Toronto. Toronto: Doubleday, p. 251.

<sup>92</sup>Politicians who ran for provincial ridings in Toronto in the early twentieth century included many names sounding either Irish or Scottish including: McNaught, McCausland, McBrien, O'Donoghue, O'Neil, McCowan, Mullowney, McTaggart, McGee, McNamara, McGuire, MacPhail, McLean, McMaster and McGlaughlin. See Lewis, pp. 421-505.



could hardly condemn professional boxing as an activity characterized by inferior races with the same bigoted ferocity it excoriated the residents of the city's ghettos, with so many boxers every bit as English, Irish and Scottish as they, Toronto's privileged class, were. Something else was going on in Toronto society and Toronto sport between the wars that made professional boxing the attraction it was. The racist newspaper coverage, discussed above, indicated the local media was a forum for the views of Toronto's British population. The GM, controlled mostly by British parties between the wars<sup>93</sup>, was an unfailing cheerleader for professional boxing then. Scores of articles and thousands of lines annually kept GM readers abreast of local cards<sup>94</sup>. Readers were usually informed of approaching events a week in advance. At no time did the GM remotely question the sport's moral legitimacy. The primary motivation for so much coverage was undoubtedly that boxing coverage sold newspapers. The

---

<sup>93</sup>Not only was The Globe published and edited by WASP's in the 1920's and 1930's, this trend continued right up to 1993. Presidents, publishers, and editors of The Globe (and Mail) have included McCullagh, Kimber, McIntosh, Jaffray, Anderson, Dalglish, Richards, Webster, Cooper, Malone, Davey, Doyle, Megarry, Stevens, Carman, Clark, Thorsell, Cruikshank, Wentz, Greenspon, McKenzie and Greenhalgh. The Toronto Star has been similarly controlled largely by White Anglo Saxon Protestant men over the decades, names like Atkinson, Hindmarsh, Stark, Tate, Goodman, Spears, Honderich, Thall, Turner, Campbell, Woods, Gordon, McIntosh and Kimpton.

<sup>94</sup>In 1921, The Globe printed 74 articles totalling 3,665 lines of space to local boxing events. In 1929, the paper's coverage was never greater, with 227 (!) articles and 15,884 lines devoted to the sport. In 1937, The Globe and Mail still allocated considerable coverage and space to boxing, writing 12,520 lines in 201 articles.

enthusiasm with which the GM covered professional boxing, however, indicated it was as supportive of the sport as its readership, illustrated by the following passage which complemented a local promoter for his ongoing efforts in presenting boxing to Toronto fans.

The standard of competition, combined with the fact that the attendance figures to get a new Canadian record for an indoor sport attraction, combined to make the show outstanding in the history of Canadian boxing. Matchmaker Playfair Brown had devoted more attention to the match and the many details involved than to any show previously promoted by him, and fully earned the many congratulations he received during and after the show<sup>95</sup>.

This was not the reporting of a newspaper that grudgingly tolerated the legal sanction of boxing. The enthusiasm with which the GM reported on the entertainment provided by local boxing matches was impressive<sup>96</sup>. The worst commentary the GM would direct toward cards was an occasional observation that an event did not meet the fan's expectations<sup>97</sup>. The few disappointing cards were only uninspiring relative to very high expectations. After a pair of mediocre promotions in

---

<sup>95</sup>The Globe, February 9, 1929.

<sup>96</sup>One card was hailed by The Globe as "a wallopfest at the Armouries (April 12, 1921), another described as "a sport spectacle that lived up to advance notices and expectations" (January 5, 1929), and a third was cited as "an enthralling battle which the crowd would not soon forget" (January 7, 1937).

<sup>97</sup>The Globe sarcastically criticized one boxer who did nothing but clinch the entire bout (January 22, 1921), another fighter was derogatorily compared to a sponge soaking up punishment (February 22, 1921), and one of Luftspring's 1937 matches was called a "punk bout" because his American opponent was well past his prime (February 4, 1937).

1929, the GM ruminated, "It took last night's boxing bouts at the Arena Gardens to make one realize that the shows of the past two weeks have not been up to the usual standard"<sup>98</sup>. The usual standard for professional boxing cards was very high. The GM was usually quite complementary about these cards, and the occasional average one in no way affected its enthusiasm in reporting the next one. The GM did not speculate whether or not it would be worthwhile for Torontonians to attend an upcoming event.

Further insight into British Toronto's perspective of professional boxing becomes evident through the following passages. The newspaper's adherence to values roughly consistent with an amateur ideology was demonstrated when it complemented the sportsmanship of a boxer who refrained from knocking out a badly beaten opponent in a 1922 bout<sup>99</sup>, an act of mercy not often associated with the professional game. The GM also occasionally reflected as to what types of boxing competition made for good boxing, revealing the kinds of bouts it did, and did not think of highly.

The 135-pound tournament provided a lot of slugging and fighting with not much competition that could be dignified by describing it as boxing...Moore administered a very artistic beating to Master Joyce in the limit of ten rounds. Moore is a cool, calculating little fellow with a world of speed and

---

<sup>98</sup>The Globe, September 18, 1929.

<sup>99</sup>The Globe, February 7, 1922.

cleverness, a two-handed thoughtful boxer, a master of ring craft<sup>100</sup>.

The GM's perception of good boxing had an almost cerebral flavour to it, in contrast to matches involving brute strength<sup>101</sup>. Assuming this newspaper's perspective was fairly representative of Torontonians, it is not surprising boxers and matches in the smaller weight divisions (least able and likely to knock out opponents) received the most support throughout this entire period<sup>102</sup>.

Even more illustrative of boxing's sanction by the GM was its sponsorship (along with the Lions Club) of an annual

---

<sup>100</sup>Ibid. , January 22, 1921.

<sup>101</sup>A tempting conclusion is that the Toronto media's and local boxing fans preference for smaller, faster, strategic boxers was a cultural remnant of the affinity that had always been felt by the British aristocracy in the 1700's and 1800's for boxing as a science. Then, gentlemen pugilists operated and promoted themselves as "doctors" or "professors" disseminating academic knowledge to wealthy, aristocratic students. See Gorn, E. (1986). The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize-Fighting in America. London: Cornell Press, pp. 47-8 & Grombach, J. V. (1977). The Saga of the Fist. New Jersey: A. S. Barnes, pp. 31 & 36. Interpreting boxing as a science made it palatable to the British elite, which abhorred the bloody brutality of prizefighting, a working-class activity in which brute strength often prevailed.

<sup>102</sup>Smaller, faster boxers, particularly flyweights and bantamweights, drew the most fans between the wars, with the slower, harder punching heavyweights consistently failing to capture the hearts of local fans. Several passages in The Globe, July 19, 1938 alluded to the previous night's show testify to the tastes of Toronto boxing fans. "It was a good bout as heavyweight battles go, but this was never a heavyweight town...you can't blame the local crowds when the men of the lighter weights give so much faster action. Even with all the heavy hitting the fans didn't take to the heavyweight fights which don't appeal to the Toronto public educated first to flyweights and then to bantamweights.

amateur tournament in May, the Newsboys Show<sup>103</sup>. This event became a prestigious Toronto sport event, taking place in front of thousands of spectators. The tournament was held to raise money for local underprivileged youth. The GM donated trophies for the champions of the tournament, in which local amateur boxers would compete against fighters from other provinces or the United States.

If the amount and tone of the GM's boxing coverage indicated the Toronto media's enthusiasm toward it, what was found in its pages further illustrated its popular appeal. Between the wars, boxing was taught in numerous avenues of Toronto life, in every place one would expect the dominant societal values to be disseminated. Ten of eleven Toronto schoolmasters were favourable to boxing being taught in their high schools<sup>104</sup>. By 1920, Upper Canada College, St. Andrews College and other Toronto preparatory schools had been staging boxing tournaments for years<sup>105</sup>. Numerous clergymen, including Methodist Reverends Hunter and Williams, were openly advocating the inclusion of boxing in their church activity programmes<sup>106</sup>. The Ministry of Education decreed all male high school teachers needed to be competent in boxing

---

<sup>103</sup>One can read about the annual Newsboy Show in The Globe in the first week of May for each year in the 1920's and 1930's.

<sup>104</sup>The Globe, November 3, 1920.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid. , November 19, 1920.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid. , November 26, 1920.

instruction to get their teaching degree, the headline of the GM article informing this being entitled, "Its Value in Educational System is Now Thoroughly Understood"<sup>107</sup>. The Chairman of the Toronto Board of Education, Dr. John Noble, lent his support to the idea of having interschool competitions among local high schools.

Nothing that a boy can engage in is more suited to better train his faculties, to keep his temper and to cheerfully take as much as he receives. I think that the board is under obligation to supply the high schools with boxing gloves just as much as it is to buy arithmetics for the public schools. Sport has played a large part in making the British Empire what it is today<sup>108</sup>.

The University of Toronto was staging intramural "Assault at Arms" tournaments, entertaining spectators with fencing, wrestling and boxing matches pitting different faculties against each other, with one show being judged by Ontario Athletic Commissioner, J. F. McGarry, himself<sup>109</sup>. Two hundred of the university's students showed up on the first day of boxing instruction in the 1920-21 school year<sup>110</sup>. The sport was a staple physical activity at both youth camps and the Y.M.C.A.<sup>111</sup>. In fact, Toronto was the first city in

---

<sup>107</sup>Ibid. , November 5, 1920.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid. , October 19, 1920.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid. , February 8, 1921.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid. , October 21, 1920.

<sup>111</sup>Donnelly, P. Subcultures and Sport: Resilience and Transformation. In Ingham, A. G. & Loy, J. (1993). Sport in Social Development. Champaign: Human Kinetics Publishers, p. 128.

Canada where the Y.M.C.A. introduced the activity, in 1908<sup>112</sup>.

These manifestations of the skill of boxing being enthusiastically taught to young men and school boys throughout a British city like Toronto for character-building purposes harken back to the manner in which the sport became rationalized and accepted in the mother country.

At the conclusion of the 19th century attack on prize fighting, the sport did not disappear. It was appropriated in a more regulated form by the middle class as 'boxing', inserted into the private educational system of the public schools, and redefined as a 'civilized' activity that would promote manliness, morality and patriotism-- a part of the 'muscular Christianity' movement that, through trade and Empire, spread around the world. As part of the 'gentlemanly art of self-defence', the teaching of boxing was extremely widespread<sup>113</sup>."

While the above examples of boxing being taught in Toronto schools, churches, and the Y.M.C.A. were not, of course, testimonies to the popularity of professional boxing itself, they do allude to a widespread acceptance of the activity in general. In such a favourable climate, with so many men learning the sport, how could professional boxing not have benefitted?

A more direct indication of professional boxing's popularity was witnessed in the patronizing of the sport by

---

<sup>112</sup>The Globe, November 5, 1920.

<sup>113</sup>Donnelly, P. Sport as a Site for Popular Resistance. In Gruneau, R. (1988). Popular Cultures and Political Practises. Toronto: Garamond, p. 76.

the city's social and political elite. Whether it was a Conservative Party meeting being entertained by Toronto's best boxers, Toronto Mayor Sam McBride (identified as one of the city's most avid boxing fans) stepping into the ring to shake a victorious boxer's hand, the prestigious Aero Club attending a card en masse in evening clothes, or prominent businessmen making reservations to attend another event, professional boxing cards were clearly prestigious and dignified social events<sup>114</sup>. The sport was so respectable, in fact, that boxing promoter Jack Corcoran received a letter from Brother Aloysius of De La Salle Collegiate congratulating him for a recent card. Brother Aloysius' letter referred to his enjoyment of the bouts, the gentlemanly behaviour of the participants, stating that "Boxing under such auspices could not help but disarm its most fastidious critics<sup>115</sup>." Toronto's most powerful and influential were not immune to boxing's appeal, and their presence at boxing promotions made for an interesting mixture of Toronto society.

It was a most cosmopolitan crowd... but the enthusiasm appeared evenly distributed. The "dress suit" row at the ringside cheered their favourites as heartily as the "dollar boys" that packed the top of the building. Members of the Provincial Legislature and civic officials, including Mayor Sam McBride were prominent at the ringside... it

---

<sup>114</sup>The Globe, May 18, 1921, March 25, October 11 & December 3, 1929.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid. , February 14, 1925.



was decided yesterday to adjourn the Legislature at 5 o'clock to enable members to attend<sup>116</sup>.

Evidence of professional boxing in Toronto being patronized by the social and political elite, however, was only uncovered in the late 1920's<sup>117</sup>.

How professional boxing could attain such an exalted status in Toronto seems enigmatic. There appeared to be a huge moral gulf separating its reputation and Anglo Toronto's moral outlook. Boxing has been cited as a working class sport which has always repelled the middle and upper classes<sup>118</sup>. Mainstream Toronto was very much an expression of middle and upper class British values. The public schools aggressively sought to instil (presumably) British traits in schoolchildren<sup>119</sup>. Toronto was still a city with strong Loyalist sympathies between the wars. Its mayor for seven consecutive terms before and after the First World War was Tommy Church, whose greatest interests were his city, the

---

<sup>116</sup>Ibid. , March 13, 1929.

<sup>117</sup>Unlike 1929, the analyses of The Globe and Mail in 1921 and 1937 revealed no references to Toronto's elite patronizing professional boxing. The late 1920's appear to be the time when the sport had its most widespread appeal and respectability.

<sup>118</sup>Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and Social Class. Social Science Information, 17 (6), p. 837.

<sup>119</sup>Traits that were assertively promoted in Toronto schools (and particularly directed at non-British schoolchildren) at the beginning of twentieth century included punctuality, regularity, obedience, industry, cleanliness, decency of appearance and behaviour, regard for the rights of others, and respect for law and order. See Harney & Troper, p. 110.

British Empire, and the Argonauts football team<sup>120</sup>. The First World War illustrates how much attachment was felt by Anglo Torontonians for their mother country. Upon the posting of the news that Canada was at war in 1914, the GM reported the reaction on Toronto streets this way.

"...the big crowds fell silent. Then a cheer broke. It was not for war, but for the King, Britain, and please God--victory... Toronto is British and its reception of the most sensational news in the history of the city was British... and the crowds began to sing, 'God Save the King.' The Queen City citizens joined lustily in that old song, 'Brittania Rules the Waves'...<sup>121</sup>."

The enthusiasm of the Canadian war effort was illustrated in that 95 per cent of the first wave of Canadian volunteers to reach Europe were overwhelmingly of British descent<sup>122</sup>. Toronto sent 70,000 men overseas to fight alongside Britain<sup>123</sup>. Canada's fighting men were thought of as quasi-British subjects, illustrated when the Minister of Militia and Defence, Sam Hughes, addressed Toronto troops by saying, "I am delighted to hear that you are conducting yourselves as becomes British soldiers<sup>124</sup>. After the war, Toronto

---

<sup>120</sup>West, p. 225.

<sup>121</sup>Paraphrased from The Globe, August 5, 1914, in West, p. 216.

<sup>122</sup>McKenzie, F. A. (1918). Canada's Day of Glory. Toronto: Briggs, p. 11.

<sup>123</sup>West, p. 231.

<sup>124</sup>West, p. 219.

continued to be a very conservative British city, prudish in some observer's eyes.

It was a separate country (Luftspring's Toronto Jewish ghetto), that area, right in the middle of a stuffy, straight-laced city of the duller half million people the 1920's could produce, Toronto's goyim [Anglo] citizenry... what was there to do anyway, if you decide to make the big trip downtown? There was nothing going on after dark. It was a cemetery<sup>125</sup>.

Toronto's character was thought to represent the good and bad qualities of early pioneer society, censorious and hard working, smug but tenacious, frugal yet reliable<sup>126</sup>. While Torontonians were largely happy with their city's "high principles", Montrealers and Europeans found its social mores intolerant and bigoted<sup>127</sup>. Some visitors were astonished at how the city's support of Sabbatarianism made it resemble a ghost town on Sundays<sup>128</sup>. One observer caustically reflected that it would be good to die in Toronto, since the transition from life to death would be scarcely noticeable<sup>129</sup>. The city was as fertile a home for the Temperance movement as it was

---

<sup>125</sup>Luftspring & Swarbrick, p. 20.

<sup>126</sup>MacInnes, G. (1935). Finding a Father. In Kilbourn, W. (1976). The Toronto Book: An Anthology of Writings, Past and Present. Toronto: MacMillan, p. 77.

<sup>127</sup>Glazebrook, p. 170.

<sup>128</sup>Gray, J. They're Fighting to Save What's Left of Sunday. In Maclean's Magazine. February 15, 1955, p. 32.

<sup>129</sup>Author not cited, (1941). The Evolution of a Scientist. Quest, p. 324.

suppressive toward Sunday amusements<sup>130</sup>. All of these facets of Toronto's moralistic character had very deep historical roots, originating in the commercial class that, a century earlier, laid its foundation as a business capital. This class had impressed on the city a puritanical morality which had never faded away<sup>131</sup>.

Toronto, then, was still a bulwark of decorum, propriety, and morality after World War One, as puritanically British a city as one could find in Canada. Professional boxing, however, seemed an unlikely sport to thrive in such a moralistic city. How could it have been so popular?

Boxing had made inroads toward acceptance during World War One in Britain and Canada. Its value in conditioning soldiers for combat was not lost on the Canadian Armed Forces. The skill was "considered excellent preparation for the hand-to-hand combat and bayonet plunge of trench warfare...<sup>132</sup>." One soldier's reflections reveal that boxing transformed young Canadian soldiers in ways that went far beyond physical conditioning.

It is somewhat extraordinary to look back at our ideals of a few years ago, to the days of the lily-

---

<sup>130</sup>Sinclair, L. (1948). We All Hate Toronto. In A Play on Words and Other Radio Plays. Toronto.

<sup>131</sup>Brunet, J. R. The Urban Community and Changing Moral Standards. In Horn, M. & Sabourin, R. (1974). Studies in Canadian Social History. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, p. 298.

<sup>132</sup>Foster, T. (1918, May). Why Our Soldiers Learn to Box. Outing, pp. 114-6.

livered throng, when boxing, like everything else in which there was a space of risk, danger, or pain was looked upon as low and ungentlemanly. I wonder if people understand the change which has come over the men at the front- the men who will dominate you when they come back concerning this<sup>133</sup>.

When Canada's veterans returned home, they brought back their love of boxing with them, then pressured politicians to legalize the sport<sup>134</sup>.

Notwithstanding this newfound acceptance, there was still considerable moral disapproval of professional boxing in the 1920's that transcended Toronto, Ontario and Canada. Most of these objections centred around a perception that it was replete with corruption, exploitation, and was uncivilized for participant and spectator alike. Harbord C.I.'s Schoolmaster Hagerty stated, "I dislike the association which boxing would bring with it. There have been so many scandals in professional boxing that I think it would be unseemly to have it dignified with High School sport<sup>135</sup>." Ottawa's first professional boxing show in 8 years took place in 1921, but not without its Presbyterian Church passing a resolution opposing the sport<sup>136</sup>. The staging of commercial bouts in Windsor during the early twentieth century invoked

---

<sup>133</sup>McKenzie, pp. 67-8.

<sup>134</sup>Kidd, B. (1994). Capturing the State for Amateur Sport: The Ontario Athletic Commission, 1920-47. Proceedings of the 7th Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport, University of Calgary, June 1-3, 1994, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup>The Globe, October 29, 1920.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid. , November 2 & 16, 1921.

considerable opposition from residents who abhorred boxing's resemblance to a blood sport, and the seedy gambling element that was an integral part of it<sup>137</sup>. The Halifax Chief of Police banned the sport in 1921, after a public altercation at the end of a bout<sup>138</sup>. A Methodist Reverend, A. E. Runnals, vigorously protested the holding of a prize fight in Montreal, or on Canadian soil, arguing such an encounter was degrading and debasing to contestants and spectators, and that the prestige and reputation of Canada would be lowered in the Anglo-Saxon and civilized world<sup>139</sup>. When there were mere rumours circulating in 1923 that major league baseball stadiums would be used for boxing matches, the American League president quickly banned boxing shows in its parks, arguing baseball should not be contaminated with so grubby a commercialized activity as boxing<sup>140</sup>. Another American observer opined the necessary personal qualities for boxing success were uncivilized.

Boxing, we all agree, is a nice exercise, but prizefighting smells to heaven and always has. As a sport, it is innocent enough, but as a business or profession it calls for certain swinish and brutish

---

<sup>137</sup>Parrat, C. (1984). Sport and Hegemony: Windsor, 1895 to 1929. Windsor: University of Windsor, pp. 22-3.

<sup>138</sup>The Globe, October 11, 1921.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid. , February 8, 1921.

<sup>140</sup>Chandler, J. M. (1988). Television and National Sport. University of Illinois, p. 31.

attributes in the participants if it is to be conducted successfully<sup>141</sup>.

An English sportswriter's thoughts reveal that revulsion toward the sport spanned the Atlantic, as early as 1923.

The fight game is surrounded...by questionable individuals who...engage in nefarious pursuits. That's boxing's cross; it cannot rid itself of crooks, the sharpers, the outsiders, the hangers on. There is a section of society- a bad, unwholesome one- that uses boxing as a shield for the commission of many sins. These people will never be eliminated<sup>142</sup>.

The common perception running through these criticisms is that the sport was intrinsically uncivilized and corrupt, a pursuit where dishonesty, exploitation and savagery were rampant. The consistently suspicious view of the sport leaves little doubt that improprieties and fraud in the sport were commonplace. Yet boxing still enjoyed a golden age between the wars in Toronto.

Mainstream support for boxing was an essential ingredient for the sport's great popularity. How this support was given, however, not only illustrates why a disreputable sport like professional boxing enjoyed such appeal, but alludes to the reason for its ultimate decline.

In the 1920's, there were two very different visions of what boxing was, and should be about. These contrasting visions were part and parcel of a much larger conflict raging

---

<sup>141</sup>Gallico, P. (1945). Farewell to Sport. Freeport: (N.Y.): Books for Libraries Press, p. 166.

<sup>142</sup>Wignall, T. (1923). Story of Boxing. London: Hutchinson, pp. 11-12.

in the world of Canadian sport. Professional boxing in Toronto received support, directly or indirectly, from groups on both side of this chasm. One group supported boxing for what it was, and what Canadian sport was increasingly becoming. The other side gave its approval on the basis of what it wanted boxing, and other sports to continue to be. One party was happily enjoying the future of sport in this nation. The other was looking, and futilely trying to turn the clock back to Canada's sporting past.

Toronto's rock solid British loyalist mindset had for decades been complemented by a cultural leaning toward her neighbour to the south<sup>143</sup>. Torontonians also knew about, thought about and were interested in, goings-on in America as early as the nineteenth century. Sport was an obvious manifestation of American ideals seeping across the border into Toronto, as well as the rest of Canada. Well before the 1920's, organized Canadian sport had been largely controlled by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAUC), which governed sport in a manner consistent with the dominant sporting ideology of Britain. The AAUC administered sport with an agenda of traditional, rigid amateurism, a mindset that sport should be played for its own sake, (not with a focus on winning) and a belief that the presence of money invariably corrupted sport with immoral practises like cheating, dirty

---

<sup>143</sup>Goheen, p. 57.



play and outcome fixing<sup>144</sup>. This hostility toward professionalism (players being financially reimbursed to compete) and commercialism (profits being made from the staging of sport events) on the Union's part did not prevent those phenomenon from sporadically showing up in competitive sport decades before the 1920's, and the origin of these commercial practises and many professional athletes was the United States. The American commercial influence over Canadian sport was a trend that had begun well before the turn of the century. Canadian baseball, particularly, had been largely Americanized, in the form of cross-border competition, salaries, and the luring of Americans to play for Canadian teams in the 1880's<sup>145</sup>. Prairie football clubs had, for many years, needed to use star imports from Western American universities to fill out their rosters, owing to smaller population bases limiting their local talent<sup>146</sup>. At the turn of the century, talented Canadian hockey players were lured to the Pittsburgh Hornets franchise by the promise of salaries<sup>147</sup>. Few sports, however, were as defined by the

---

<sup>144</sup>For more detailed accounts of the amateur ideology controlling Canadian sport from the 1880's to the 1930's, see Metcalfe (1987) and Lansley, K. L. (1971). The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

<sup>145</sup>Metcalfe, (1987), pp. 85-95.

<sup>146</sup>Sullivan, J. (1974). The Grey Cup Story. Toronto: Pagurian, p. 12.

<sup>147</sup>Simpson, W. Hockey. In Morrow, D. (1989). A Concise History of Sport in Canada. Toronto: Oxford, p. 180.

American commercial approach to sport as professional boxing.

Boxing was wholeheartedly adopted by a large portion of the American sporting public<sup>148</sup> (though few legislators and judges) before the turn of the century, and was inherently about the pursuit of money, by both boxers and promoters alike<sup>149</sup>. For its part, few Canadian cities were as ripe for the emergence of commercial sport as Toronto, being a very large city with a huge potential audience of urban dwellers with the time, money, and desire to patronize sporting entertainment, and one so geographically close to the most populous region of the United States<sup>150</sup>.

Prior to the 1920's, then, boxing was already a commercial sport whose most fertile home was the United States. Commercial sport in general had already spread to varying degrees into Canada, and Toronto was a city particularly ripe to fall under the sway of this American obsession with big-money sporting events. The ingredients

---

<sup>148</sup>A glance at the locations of world title fights between 1892, the year thought to represent the beginning of the modern age of professional boxing, and 1920, when the sport became legalized in New York State and the Province of Ontario, reveals numerous American locales being used as the sites for such promotions. See: The Ring: 1984 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia.

<sup>149</sup>Sammons, pp. 13-5 & 67, reveals that the sport had taken on an obviously commercial face in the 1890's, with posh New Orleans Boxing Clubs lobbying and paying for the right to stage lucrative bouts on their premises. The most influential promoter in boxing, even before the First World War, was Tex Rickard, described as a "master of ballyhoo" who perfected the art of promoting fights as epic spectacles to the public.

<sup>150</sup>Lappage, p. 202.

were in place for professional boxing's golden age in Toronto. Each of the above trends became accentuated after the First World War.

With Canada emerging from World War One with a greater sense of independence than ever before, it was inevitable its colonial mentality would be weakened. Canada had won the world's respect through her contributions on the battlefield<sup>151</sup>, and with that respect came a determination by Canadians (although still very loyal to Britain) to be recognized as a nation in its own right<sup>152</sup>. Canada's desire to carve its niche in the world resulted in a breaking away from British attitudes and norms. This newly acquired independent identity manifested itself in many avenues of Canadian life, and (rather ironically) resulted in drawing the country even further into the orbit of American culture. Canadians increasingly came to emulate their neighbours who, like themselves, sought (in the 1920's) to forget the carnage

---

<sup>151</sup>Vimy Ridge is the First World War battle which is most often cited as the conflict that established a reputation of Canada being a strong, courageous nation in its own right. See Wood, H. F. (1967). Vimy. Toronto: MacMillan, pp. 169-70.

<sup>152</sup>Prime Minister Borden assertively lobbied, and succeeded in attaining for Canada a separate place at the Versaille peace negotiations, a compelling indication of the determination of Canada to be properly recognized for the heavy price paid by such a small country on the battlefields of Europe. See in Dancocks, D. (1987). Spearhead to Victory: Canada and the Great War. Edmonton: Hurtig, pp. 232-40.

of war, and find as many sources of enjoyment as they could<sup>133</sup>.

...Canada had just come through some thirty-five years of unparalleled prosperity...Laurier's famous remark about Canada's Century was on everybody's lips, and with good reason. Canadians were a cocky lot in the twenties. Certainly the Great War had exacted a sobering toll, but the country could not help being intoxicated by the success of the Canadian Corps, symbolized by the remarkable victory at Vimy Ridge. We were a nation. We had come of age. The Twentieth Century belonged to us<sup>134</sup>.

Canadians enjoying the miracle invention of radio were listening to a huge preponderance of American entertainment and news broadcasts, movie-goers were far more likely to be watching American films than domestic ones, and the music and dance styles witnessed in Canadian dance halls and night clubs were typically those that originated from the United States<sup>135</sup>.

In the realm of sport, specifically, Canadian fans were far less willing to follow the ideology of the A.A.U.C.<sup>136</sup>. In the 1920's, the Union continued to cling to its traditional British sporting mindset, its leader calling for a return to a rigid, traditional amateur interpretation of athletic

---

<sup>133</sup>Roberts. R. (1979). Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, p. 58.

<sup>134</sup>Berton (1990), p. 25.

<sup>135</sup>Berton, P. & Bliss, M. (1978). The Crazy Twenties. Toronto: McClelland, pp. 51, 53 & 73.

<sup>136</sup>Lansley, pp. 162-63.

eligibility, to an idealized past in which sport was a pleasant diversion for gentlemen<sup>157</sup>, far removed from the corrupting presence of money. Few could deny that the battle being waged for the soul of Canadian sport was a one sided affair in favour of the ticket counter, a process that has never been reversed (to the detriment of an independent Canadian culture according to one scholar<sup>158</sup>) since.

...the struggle...between these two factions...was similar to the larger one encompassing American and British influences. Amateurism was of the old world while professionalism represented more clearly the American way. British influences were receding slowly...while the influences from Canada's Southern neighbour were poised to fill in the void<sup>159</sup>.

The reaction of those observers who supported the Union's stance, many of them undoubtedly British Canadians with the same ideological disdain toward American commercial sport, ranged from concern to horror.

...the athletic viewpoint of this country has yielded to...the American influence...we are taking our cues from our cousins beyond the border, reconstructing our major games to appeal to the watcher rather than the player--because these games have become specialized branches of Big Business...<sup>160</sup>.

---

<sup>157</sup>Ibid. , pp. 163, 164-65, 170 & 172.

<sup>158</sup>Kidd, B. (1974). Sports or Athletics: A North American Dilemma. Proceedings of the 15th Annual Canadian/American Seminar, University of Windsor, November 15 & 16, 1973, pp. 134-41.

<sup>159</sup>Cosentino, p. 288.

<sup>160</sup>Roberts, L. (November, 1931). Americanizing Canadian Sport. The Canadian Magazine. p. 8.

Some went even further in condemning the erosion of sport for its own sake, bitterly criticizing the media's role in building up professional athletes as heroes, suggesting Canadians were slavishly zealous in imitating America's approach to sport<sup>161</sup>.

This stance, increasingly obsolete in the face of changing times, would ultimately lead to the beginning of the A.A.U.C.'s demise as a powerful sport governing body in 1936<sup>162</sup>, for an increasing number of urban Canadians were more receptive to blatantly commercial sporting events; sport as a form of mass entertainment. Evidence of this was seen in the National Hockey League's expansion into the American market<sup>163</sup> and its rapid increase in attendance<sup>164</sup>, in Canadian universities dropping out of Grey Cup football competition because they could not compete with professional-laden club teams<sup>165</sup>, and with the increasingly enthusiastic

---

<sup>161</sup>Fairfax, J. (October, 1940). Canada's Colonial Complex: Sports. The Canadian Forum. pp. 213-4.

<sup>162</sup>Metcalf, A. (1983). The Demise of Amateurism in Canada. Proceedings of the FISU Conference-Universiade 83 in Association with the 10th HISPA Conference, pp. 308-15.

<sup>163</sup>Cosentino, F. (1973). History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport. Edmonton: University of Alberta, p. 272.

<sup>164</sup>Lappage, p. 101.

<sup>165</sup>Cosentino, p. 296.

media portrayal of professional athletes, teams and leagues<sup>166</sup>. In the eyes of Canadians, professionalism in sport had become synonymous with high quality entertainment in the 1920's<sup>167</sup>, not with dishonest practises. Toronto was increasingly the site of professional sporting contests involving American/Canadian competition between the wars, particularly at the annual Canadian National Exhibition, where lucrative swimming, track, motor boat, and softball events took place<sup>168</sup>.

At the same time that Canada, and Toronto specifically, was becoming more receptive to the linkage between elite sport and money demonstrated by America, boxing was hitting its stride as a lucrative, multi-million dollar spectacle in the latter country. As had been the case with Canada's soldiers, American servicemen also returned from Europe with a love for pugilism. They "...wholeheartedly endorsed boxing. Many had been instructed in the sport, for warfare and as a means to dispel camp tensions<sup>169</sup>." In no sport was the acceleration of commercialism in the 1920's more rapid than in boxing.

---

<sup>166</sup>Ibid. , pp. 328-30 & 384. Cosentino outlines in detail the media's role in helping create and maintain an audience for professional sport, the most compelling example being the publicity allotted to the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team, which began to receive passionate support from coast to coast in the 1930's.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid. , p. 337.

<sup>168</sup>Lappage, p. 99.

<sup>169</sup>Roberts, p. 52.

In the 1920's sports became a big business, and no sport more so than boxing. In the twenties, boxing was commercialized; it became a big business, an industry controlled by big businessmen, run on business principles, financed by banks and licensed and supervised by state laws and officials just as banking and insurance...Before the 1920's, there was never a million dollar gate, and after the 1920's there were only 4 between 1930 and 1960. But during the 1920's there were 5 million dollar gates<sup>170</sup>.

That America was the home of professional boxing, and a very lucrative home at that, is not difficult to support. The United States was the undisputed centre of elite boxing, with New York City the focal point<sup>171</sup>. Although the sport became legal in both Ontario and the United States in the same year, the American attendance and gate revenues indicate that boxing's popularity in that country was in a league of its own. In the 1920's and 1930's, championship bouts in the United States were so wildly popular, they were often held in baseball parks to satisfy ticket demand<sup>172</sup>. This country

---

<sup>170</sup>Ibid, pp. 168 & 234. The term "gate" refers to the total amount of money generated by ticket sales at a sport promotion. If 50,000 tickets for a boxing show are sold at \$20 each, then the "gate" for the event would be 1 million dollars. In boxing history, promotions that drew million dollar gates were a very rare occurrence, an indication that it caught the imagination of, and generated tremendous public interest in the 1920's.

<sup>171</sup>Adelman, M. (1986). A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70. Urbana: University of Illinois, p. 230. Adelman informs the reader that New York was America's professional boxing capital as early as the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>172</sup>The Ring: 1978 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia. New York: Ring Magazine, pp. 122-3. Heavyweight Champion Jack Dempsey fought in front of crowds of 80,183 (July 2, 1921 versus Carpentier), 82,000 (September 14, 1923, Firpo), 120,757 (September



virtually monopolized boxing, with the overwhelming majority of champion boxers being American and important bouts being held there<sup>173</sup>. The United State's huge supply of professional boxers illustrates where the "money was" for young men seeking to make a living with their fists<sup>174</sup>. The reality was that Toronto's professional boxing entertainment between the wars was interwoven with, and dependent on American boxing, a small fish in a huge pond. There were many Yankee boxers appearing in Toronto between the wars,

---

23, 1926, Tunney), 75,000 (July 21, 1927, Sharkey), and 104,943 (September 22, 1927, Tunney). In the 1930's, Joe Louis attendances at Joe Louis' fights reached 62,000 (June 25, 1935, versus Carnera), 88,150 (September 24, 1935, Baer), 45,500 (June 12, 1937, Braddock), 32,000 (August 30, 1937, Farr) and 70,043 (June 28, 1938, Schmeling).

These figures represent only a small sampling of the huge crowds attending world title fights in American cities between the wars, most far exceeding any crowd that ever attended a boxing show in Canada, much less Toronto.

The huge crowds, of course, made for huge profits at the box office, with Dempsey's first fight with Tunney grossing almost \$1.9 million at Philadelphia's Sesquicentennial Stadium. Roberts, p. 228.

<sup>173</sup>The Ring: 1984 Record Book reveals that between 1920 and 1939, 257 of 341 (75%) world title bouts were held in America, with 126 (37%) in New York. Seventy-four of 122 (61%) world champions crowned during this period were Americans.

<sup>174</sup>In the May, 1950 issue of The Ring, a survey conducted by its publisher, Nat Fleisher, estimated there were (in 1950) 20,000 professional boxers in the world, with 6,000 from America, in a time when it was largely accepted that the boxing ranks had been seriously depleted by the advent of television and death of many small fight clubs. One can reasonably expect that the number of professional boxers in America in the 1920's and 1930's was considerably greater than 6,000.

particularly in 1929, when Toronto's crowds were the largest<sup>175</sup>. With as many as 25, 28, and 29 cards taking place in selected years, and with at least 10 boxers required for each event, "outside" boxers were essential. American boxers from New York state, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan were an attractive, convenient choice for local promoters to match against hometown pugilists. That 68 American fighters appeared in the Queen City in 1929, and 47 more in 1937, illustrates how Toronto boxing was reliant on her neighbour's passion for the sport, particularly the Great Lakes region on her doorstep<sup>176</sup>. American also provided many of the best boxers to appear in Toronto. In the late 1920's, the most attractive boxing cards regularly featured the world's best flyweights, many more of which were from America than from anywhere else. No fewer than eight world-class American

---

<sup>175</sup>Americans constituted 29% (26 of 89) of the different individual boxers appearing at least once in Toronto in 1921, but 54% (68 of 125) in 1929, and 43% (47 of 110) in 1937.

<sup>176</sup>Thirty-four of the 68 American boxers appearing in Toronto in 1929 were from upstate New York, a stone's throw from Toronto. Competing in Toronto were 13 boxers from Buffalo, nine from Rochester, seven from Syracuse, three from Erie and two from Jamestown. Twenty-five more were from Indianapolis (seven), Pennsylvania (seven), New York City (six), Chicago (three), or Boston (2). The American boxing contingent was again overwhelmingly from the Northeast United States in 1937. Fifteen boxers were from New York state (Syracuse: two, Niagara Falls: one, New York: two, Buffalo: seven, Rochester: three), and another 26 were from the following: Michigan (Pontiac: one, Ann Arbor: one, Detroit: six), Ohio (Cleveland: three, Columbus: one, Akron: five), Illinois (Chicago: three, Peoria: one), and Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh: three, Scranton: one, Philadelphia: one).

flyweights came to Toronto in 1929<sup>177</sup>. It was when the professional promotions had a greater American flavour that the largest boxing crowds were witnessed, this city's fans being most receptive to elite Yankee boxers<sup>178</sup>. The boxing Torontonians most wanted to see had an obvious American flavour to it, especially when the Queen City had elite local fighters who were competitive with those from the United States.

It was not just the dependence of Toronto promoters on American boxers that illustrated the imposing and superior presence of American boxing on Toronto's doorstep. Even before the golden age of boxing had ended, Toronto fighters with aspirations of winning a world title were inclined (required?) to journey south of the border to realize their potential.

...the level of the skill you could see in the rings around Toronto in the 1930's was nowhere near

---

<sup>177</sup>The Ring: 1981 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia, p. 847.

Six of The Ring's top ten world-ranked flyweights, published at year's end, were Americans making a total of 20 appearances in Toronto. They were Midget Wolgast (two), Willie Davies (five), Willie La Morte (three), Phil Tobias (two), Johnny McCoy (five) and Ruby Bradley (three). Two more elite American flyweights who fought in Toronto were former world champion Izzy Schwartz (two appearances) and Harry Goldstein (two).

<sup>178</sup>In 1921, hometown boxers accounted for 92 of 155 (59%) boxers who made up the shows presented in Toronto. In this year, there were only 15 boxing shows and a projected year's attendance of 67,500. In 1929 and 1937, when there were more cards (28 and 54), and greater projected volumes of fans (183,633 and 119,458), the Toronto portion of the cards had dropped to 45% (125 of 279) and 46% (118 of 256). In short, the sport was thriving the most at the time when more than half of the entertainment (the composition of the cards) was "outside" boxers, many of whom were American.

the level of skill at the top of the American fight world...my development as a fighter wouldn't really begin until I was in the hands of top Americans. I learned more in my first two weeks at Lou Stillman's Gym in New York... than I had learned in a hundred fights in my native country<sup>179</sup>.

If the superior quality of boxing in the United States was the yardstick by which all other boxing was measured, it is not surprising the greatest volumes of attendance in the Queen City were realized in the relatively brief periods when Toronto actually had a few boxers who could beat the Americans at their own game. In the late 1920's, when Toronto had a pair of flyweights who were good enough to contest the world title, the city was recognized as the flyweight capital of the world. In the late 1930's, when several world-class bantamweights called Toronto home, Toronto was regarded as a bantamweight centre<sup>180</sup>. Without a doubt, the occasional presence of world-class hometown boxers who were up to American standards further facilitated the sport's appeal.

---

<sup>179</sup>Luftspring & Swarbrick, pp. 44 & 46. While Luftspring represents only one experience, it must be acknowledged that he was one of the very few Toronto boxers who competed with success against elite American competition in the late 1930's. His most significant victories, the ones that catapulted him into the top ten world rankings, happened after he moved his career to New York.

<sup>180</sup>Repeated references were made in The Globe (August 23, April 21, May 2, September 5 & 10, 1929) to Toronto being the city in the late 1920's where the world's best flyweights fought the most often. In the late 1930's, the city saw a number of world class bantamweights compete, including world champion Sixto Escobar, the future world champion, Cleveland's George Pace, Henry Hook of Indianapolis, and local boxer Baby Yack. It was written in The Globe, September 19, 1938, that bantamweight boxers at that time regarded Toronto as a more important boxing city than New York.

Thus, the popularity of the sport in Toronto was, at least partially, defined by American standards. The United States' obsession with professional boxing played a large role in the sport's popularity in Toronto between the wars, both in the requisite importing of American talent, and in the tendency of Torontonians to emulate its neighbour's commercial approach to sport. If boxing had not enjoyed such passionate support south of the border after the First World War, it is unlikely there would ever have been a golden age for the sport in Toronto.

Toronto's tendency to emulate America's love of professional boxing was as unlikely to be enthusiastically received by the OAC as the overall commercial trend being taken by Canadian sport in general was by the AAUC. The positions taken by the OAC make one wonder whether the Commission really had given its sanction and support to professional boxing as the sport really was.

The wording of the Athletic Commission Act of 1920 actually stated that the primary objective of the legislation was not about professional boxing at all. "The object of the commission shall be to assist, promote and encourage amateur sport and recreation in schools, community centres and through associations of amateur sportsmen<sup>181</sup>." It is only in the next passage that one reads of "Special authority" being given to a sub-committee of three commissioners to supervise

---

<sup>181</sup>The Revised Statutes of Ontario, p. 3348.

professional boxing and wrestling. In subsequent passages, it is outlined that licensing and tax revenues imposed on the sport would be used to fund amateur sport. The placement of the "support amateur sport" passage before the section pertaining to professional boxing in this legislation implies the Ontario government's first interest and greatest concern was helping amateur sport. This legislation was, first and foremost, about disseminating amateur sport and its values<sup>182</sup>.

Further doubts as to whether Toronto's political establishment was really embracing professional boxing are seen in that, notwithstanding its newly bestowed sanction of professional boxing, legislators were still concerned about the nature of boxing events and the parties involved in them. Even after the passage of the Ontario Athletic Commission Act in 1920, it was still the local police who were responsible for monitoring the sport.

Acting Chief of Police Dickson announced yesterday following a conference with the newly-formed Ontario Government Boxing and Athletic Commission and the Police Commissioners that it was agreed that the commissions co-operate with each other. *The Police Commissioners still control the game but will co-operate with the Boxing Commission.* "I am quite satisfied with the Boxing Commission, they are a good body of governors," stated the Chief<sup>183</sup>.

---

<sup>182</sup>Kidd (1994), p. 1.

<sup>183</sup>The Globe, October, 1920.

The Ontario Government in 1920 was clearly still worried about the nature of professional boxing.

It was not long before crowd control problems were observed that confirmed the Commission's fears. The OAC was actually considering abandoning its legalization of the sport because of what it perceived as spectator rowdyism. Toronto boxing fans were apparently behaving inappropriately at local cards.

...a member of the Commission was heard to remark that unless the spectators refrain from boisterous applause and preserve fitting decorum, there is a likelihood that they will be deprived of their favourite sport. Handclapping or other sportsmanlike evidences of commendations are quite to be expected, but some fans resort to methods that will not be tolerated<sup>184</sup>.

Within a week, the Commission reflected it would give one last warning to spectators to keep order or professional boxing would become a thing of the past, and then ordered promoters to employ large enough police squads to control unruly elements at their events<sup>185</sup>. That the most emotional type of fan reaction that the Commission could abide was handclapping makes one wonder exactly what fan behaviour was so horrifying as to make the Commissioner consider the withdrawal of the sport's legal sanction. Did they jump out of their seats, wave their arms, or scream? This contrast between the political establishment's view of acceptable

---

<sup>184</sup>Ibid. , August 17, 1921.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid. , August 18 & 24, 1921.

decorum and the actual conduct of some fans was a problem right from the very start ("one last warning"), suggesting a fundamental difference in how the sport was perceived by those two parties. The Commission's rationale for demanding better behaviour from fans was that it had taken a corrupt activity and made it morally upright, illustrated by its self-congratulatory statements claiming it had made boxing clean and elevated it to a higher plane<sup>186</sup>. Apparently, professional boxing was dirty and occupied a low moral plane right up to the day the Ontario Athletic Commission took charge of the sport in June, 1920, at which time the sport suddenly became transformed into a respectable, civilized pursuit. The Commission's insistence that professional boxing was now a good and pure sport, while at the same time openly admitting its determination to stamp out unsavoury aspects of the sport that seemed commonplace, seems an untenable contradiction.

The OAC was also intent on combatting fraud and deceit in professional boxing. A Commission official actually entered the ring to call off a bout in 1920, out of suspicion that one of the boxers was cheating the customers by not trying<sup>187</sup>.

---

<sup>186</sup>Ibid. , August 18 & 21, 1921.

<sup>187</sup>This scenario, in which a bout could be suddenly terminated if it seemed one, or sometimes both, contestants were simply going through the motions of earning a paycheque, may sound strange to modern day boxing fans, most of whom have probably never seen it happen. Judging by The Globe and Mail and The Ring, this type of conclusion to a fight (one in which the public was protected from fraud) was not entirely uncommon in the 1920's and 1930's.



The OAC further let it be known it was contemplating a boxer identification system to prevent the common practise of boxers misrepresenting their identities, and was co-operating with other North American commissions to crack down on professional boxing "crooks"<sup>188</sup>. Ontario's law-makers were not shy about rooting out what they perceived as extensive corruption in this sport after the First World War.

The Commission's mindset toward what constituted good boxing echoed the preference of the GM and many Toronto fans for flyweight action. The OAC implemented amateur rules on the conduct of professional boxing matches, the intent being to make for more scientific, less barbarous fights<sup>189</sup>.

Even more than the above, the OAC's position in regards to where the revenue generated by ticket sales at professional cards should go, indicated it was in a state of moral denial (or breathtaking naivete) about the real nature of the sport to which they had given their approval. The Commission was determined, early on, that proceeds from this most commercial of professional sports should go exclusively to charitable causes, and this perspective was never more evident than when the 1921 bout between American World Heavyweight Champion,

---

Fighters who were "tossed out" in this manner often had their purses withheld, pending investigation, and ran the risk of being suspended from further competition in a given jurisdiction.

<sup>188</sup>The Globe, November 9 & 25, 1920.

<sup>189</sup>Kidd, (1994), p. 12.

Jack Dempsey and Frenchman Georges Carpentier was about to unfold. This match stimulated tremendous world-wide interest, and numerous cities lobbied to stage the bout, which promised to be a financial windfall. When promotional interests in Toronto vied for the bout, the OAC quickly dismissed the idea.

There isn't the slightest possibility of the Dempsey-Carpentier bout being brought to Toronto... The...Commission is unanimously opposed to the contest being held within its bailiwick. Without the endorsement of the Commission, the bout could not be held. The...Commission has other aims...than the promotion of boxing bouts for gain for other than the overseas veteran's organizations or for...charitable causes...In view of...the Dempsey/Carpentier bout being foisted on an unwilling public, an expression of opinion was sought from acting chairman, P. J. Mulqueen and John P. J. McGarry of the Commission...both expressed almost identically the same view- that a bout in which a half a million dollars is involved ceases to be sport and is purely a sporting proposition...<sup>190</sup>.

In reality, it was the Commission, in serving its own ideological agenda, that was unwilling to accept the bout. Toronto boxing fans likely would have been interested in patronizing the Dempsey/Carpentier bout, judging by the volume of spectators in the Queen City who patronized commercial boxing events in general in this era, as well as the number of Canadian sport fans in general who crowded around radios to listen to it transpire in New Jersey<sup>191</sup>. The Commission, in 1921, could not bring itself to allow this bout to take place in the Queen City. Large amounts of money tainted whatever

---

<sup>190</sup>The Globe, January 22, 1921.

<sup>191</sup>Lappage, p. 180.

value boxing had in its eyes, the OAC wanting all proceeds not allotted to the contestants' purses to support amateur sport and Toronto's First World War veterans. Commissioners McGarry and Mulqueen were members of the Sportsmen Patriotic Association, a benevolent organization formed during the war that continued afterward to arrange numerous events to benefit the needy<sup>192</sup>. For that matter, all five of the original Commissioners were high-ranking members of the AAUC<sup>193</sup>. Such men, lovers of amateur sport, were essentially denying the commercial quality of the very sport they had legalized only seven months earlier. With such a mindset controlling boxing, there was little incentive for anyone seeking profit to legally stage a professional show. The revenue breakdown of a November, 1920 bout reveals that more than 98% of the gate receipts went to the contestants, veteran's charity, and the OAC's portion for amateur sport<sup>194</sup>. In 1920's Toronto, however, this policy was doomed to failure. Scandals developed in 1921 in which the OAC threatened to withdraw Toronto's licenses, owing to suspicions that proceeds earmarked for charity wound up in private hands<sup>195</sup>. The

---

<sup>192</sup>The Globe, March 17, 1925.

<sup>193</sup>Kidd (1994), p. 13.

<sup>194</sup>The Globe, November 30, 1920. The boxers, Wallace and Joyce, received \$1816.64 and \$1307.88 respectively. The Commission took \$382.45 and \$4,000 went to veteran's charity, leaving only \$141.99 of a \$7,649 gate total unaccounted for.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid. , January 31 & February 11, 1921.

Commission was less than eight months old and already its values were clashing with the intrinsic nature of professional boxing. Toronto, in fact, was angrily singled out by the OAC as the only Ontario city where these "abuses" of commercialism were happening. By the end of 1921, further transgressions had tested the Commission's patience even more.

Mr. Mulqueen said that these bodies (soldier's groups) had hurt themselves by their actions (sub-letting their contracts) and have lost claim to the exclusive right of conducting the shows. He further hinted that should things not be changed for the better, boxing in Toronto would be stopped. In other parts of the Province there has been no such trouble he said, and Toronto will be the only city to suffer if any action is taken<sup>196</sup>.

The OAC's anger was especially acute in that the veteran's groups themselves had specifically asked the Commission for the exclusive right to stage boxing events for two years<sup>197</sup>. The fate of the sport in Toronto was significant since it was the only Ontario city where boxing had any regular presence<sup>198</sup>. The Commission did not withdraw

---

<sup>196</sup>Ibid. , December 29, 1921.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid. , October 22, 1920. This article implied the OAC was receptive to the idea of giving such groups exclusive promotion rights over Toronto professional boxing events. Part of the reason for this receptivity was likely that the Commission's very existence came about as a result of the Sportsmen's Patriotic Association, which had put forward the idea to create a boxing governing body. Subsequent developments indicate that this request was, at some point in time, granted.

<sup>198</sup>Toronto was cited in The Globe, October 31, 1929, as the only Ontario city with standing licenses to hold boxing shows, it being (in the Commission's eyes) the only one large enough to warrant them. All other Ontario cities were given permits rather than licenses. Presumably, permits were more temporary, specific to one event, with new permits required for each promotion.

Toronto's boxing licenses in the end, likely because doing so would have cut off the revenue that professional boxing was generating for the type of sport that was really closest to the Commission's heart, namely amateur sport. By 1922, then, the OAC ended its policy of trying to keep commercial profit out of professional boxing. Licenses were opened up to private club interests because it was obvious commercialism could not be stopped. Even when the right to promote professional shows had been limited to the most "pure" and benevolent interests imaginable, war veteran's charities, commercial profit had still insidiously wormed its way into the sport. The money to be made in boxing was obviously a temptation too strong to resist (even by charitable groups who sublet their contracts), Commission or no Commission. Those individuals intent on sidling up to the financial gold mine that was boxing in 1920's Toronto were not about to be dissuaded by the Government's assumptions about "strictly business propositions not being sport." The commercial nature of professional boxing was an inherent fact that could not be stopped, denied, or ignored by the Ontario Government. The Commission's new response to commercialism in boxing, was to narrowly limit the number of licenses being given out to promoters, usually keeping the number of active licenses at one, two, or three<sup>199</sup>. By 1929, every one of the shows being

---

<sup>199</sup>In the May, 1923 issue of The Ring, one reads that two new Toronto boxing/athletic clubs, the International Sporting Club and the Rudd Athletic Club were granted licenses to stage professional

one, two, or three<sup>199</sup>. By 1929, every one of the shows being held in Toronto were staged by a single promoter, Playfair Brown<sup>200</sup>. Brown was clearly an entrepreneur motivated by personal profit, not charity<sup>201</sup>. The commercial staging of professional boxing shows by people like Brown was wholeheartedly accepted by Toronto fans, and became increasingly popular by the late 1920's. Taken as a whole, then, the sanction of professional boxing itself (in contrast with boxing instruction specifically) by Ontario's political elite in the 1920's, which played a critical role in facilitating the sport's great popularity, was not so much an embracing of boxing by the predominantly British

---

<sup>199</sup>In the May, 1923 issue of The Ring, one reads that two new Toronto boxing/athletic clubs, the International Sporting Club and the Rudd Athletic Club were granted licenses to stage professional shows, in addition to the already licensed Gayety Theatre. The Ring, July, 1925, informs of "only two clubs" being in operation. The first six months of boxing reporting by The Globe and Mail in 1937 reveals almost weekly shows with two promoters, Jack Corcoran and Frank Tunney, alternating their promotions. In late 1946, Playfair Brown ended a brief comeback in the Toronto boxing promotion game when he declared he would not apply for a renewed license for the new year, since there was not room in Toronto for a third promoter.

<sup>200</sup>The Globe, October 31, 1929 cites Brown as having staged 31 shows in the previous 12 months, a figure that appears to cover every show reported on by this newspaper during that time frame.

<sup>201</sup>The Globe's reporting reveals that Brown promoted scores of professional boxing shows in Toronto between the 1920's and 1950's, with many references as to whether or not he made or lost money on a particular show. The Globe and Mail's portrayal of him by the late 1940's (to be discussed in the next chapter) was such that there could be no doubt he was promoting boxing shows for the same reason any other commercial entrepreneur does, to make money.

establishment, but a concession by it toward a trend that was happening whether it liked it or not. Commercial sport in general, and boxing in particular, was increasingly popular with Torontonians in the 1920's. The only option available for the Ontario Government, in order to keep a close watch over the sport and support amateur sport, was to legalize the sport, and pretend that it had reformed professional boxing. Ideally, both the OAC and (to a lesser extent) the GM (which seemed to echo, or at least not oppose the Commission's positions) would have preferred a type of boxing in which all profits stayed out of commercial hands, boxers fought scientifically rather than violently, spectators maintained "proper decorum", and boxers visibly demonstrated sportsmanship in the ring. The Commission and the GM were attempting to remain true to the ideological assumptions of the dominant British culture whose interests it represented, while at the same time sanctioning and regulating a sport whose very nature was antithetical to those assumptions.

There were further indications that boxing's acceptance was neither universal nor a constant in a predominantly British city like Toronto. In the early 1930's professional boxing's popularity actually dipped far below that of amateur boxing. In 1933, when professional boxing cards were drawing much smaller crowds than in 1929, amateur promotions were

unfolding in front of vastly larger crowds<sup>202</sup>. The latter had supplanted the former in the hearts of Toronto boxing fans, according to The Ring.

Amateur boxing is holding sway...in Montreal and Toronto, where the Simon Pures are well established...they are doing so well in Toronto they have the pros crowded out of the Queen City...Playfair Brown...was so disgusted with the poor attendance for his (professional) card... he announced he was through with the game. In the meantime, the amateurs are drawing big crowds at the Arena Gardens and capacity houses at the club attraction...<sup>203</sup>.

This superiority of amateur boxing's appeal in the early 1930's indicates that the loyalty of Toronto to the professional version, while strong, was not absolute. The amateur game had its own attraction that was capable of surpassing the monied sport. Notwithstanding the popular assumption that the health of the professional game is interwoven with amateur sport, as well as ongoing references in The Ring blaming the decline of the former on the lack of local talent being nurtured in the latter<sup>204</sup>, the divergent states of the two in the early 1930's prove that at a given point in time, the two sports could actually be competing with each other for the entertainment dollar of the Toronto boxing

---

<sup>202</sup>The Globe, January 10, 17 & 24, February 7, 14 & 28, 1933. Readers were informed of attendances at amateur shows (on the respective previous nights) of 6,400, 7,000, 9,000, 4,000, 5,795, 4,400, and 3,500, an average of 5,725 per show. The first seven professional shows in 1933 totalled 18,553, an average of only 2,648.

<sup>203</sup>The Ring, April, 1934.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid. , February & June, 1932, January, 1937.



fan. Many thousands of Toronto fans were willing to pay to see amateur cards in this period, but were unwilling to patronize professional events. The pendulum of support began swinging back to the professional sport by the mid-1930's<sup>205</sup>, implying that its decline may have been more a result of an absence of talented, marketable boxers, and not an indication that the Toronto fans had abandoned the sport. Clearly, some of the talented amateurs who had attracted such large crowds in 1933, entered the professional ranks, and brought with them already established local fan followings.

The superior crowds at amateur cards in the early 1930's indicates that Toronto's support of the professional game could be withdrawn if fans were not satisfied with the entertainment. Sport fans shifted their loyalty to amateur boxing when they saw more of what they liked in that sport. This simple fact illustrates that the hearts of some boxing fans in mainly Anglo Toronto, likely many of those who still agreed with the ideologies of the AAUC and the OAC, were at least as close, and perhaps closer, to the clearly "purer" sport of amateur boxing. It was when Toronto had hometown fighters like Rocco and Belanger in the late 1920's, and Luftspring, Yack and Armstrong in the late 1930's who were

---

<sup>205</sup>In The Ring, May, 1935, one reads, "The Elm Grove A.A.A.C. staged another American-Canadian Series...crowd numbered only 2,700...getting smaller all the time. The boxing game has slumped to its lowest level in years here and amateurs in some divisions have stayed amateur too long, thereby spoiling the pro game where new blood is needed."

fighting competitively against elite American opposition that huge numbers of Torontonians could not resist professional boxing, as they did not want to miss the spectacle of watching a local son battle for a Canadian or world crown.

What, then, can be concluded about the nature of professional boxing's popularity in Toronto between the First and Second World Wars? Toronto was a city dominated, in terms of population and power (social, political and economic) by people of British descent. This domination manifested itself in a society in which the lives of those belonging to other ethnic groups were characterized by isolation, discrimination and poverty. For men belonging to such ethnic groups, boxing was one of a narrow range of choices to achieve the good life. Their motivation to succeed in the ring is clearly indicated by the fact that Toronto's most talented boxers were often men who emerged from such impoverished ethnic ghettos. These men provided some of the greatest thrills for Toronto boxing fans during this era, and their talent certainly maximized the sport's appeal. Their communities at large undoubtedly gained considerable pride from their accomplishments, given that such Toronto minorities had few social and economic avenues open to them in a blatantly discriminatory society. The inclination of men from poor ethnic ghettos to garner fame and fortune in the ring alone, however, would never have been enough to make the sport as popular as it was. The existence of poor, marginalized ethnic groups in Toronto certainly predated the

1920's, when professional boxing's popularity surged. In order for professional boxing's popularity to reach the heights it did after World War One, the approval of the dominant Anglo culture mainstream was a prerequisite factor. This approval was forthcoming in Toronto in the 1920's. The teaching of boxing in schools, churches, the University of Toronto, and youth activity programmes, the obvious vitality of amateur boxing, the favourable media coverage by the GM, and the occasional patronage of the social and political elite all contributed to the popularity of the sport. The teaching of boxing in so many different parts of Toronto society had a carryover effect on the professional game's popularity, creating more potential boxers and a larger audience than would otherwise have been the case. Enthusiastic coverage by the GM cannot help but have facilitated greater interest in the sport. Readers of the GM in the 1920's and 1930's were exposed to boxing news often and in depth, introducing them to the names and exploits of numerous boxers, from Toronto and beyond. Upcoming shows were written about many days in advance, giving its readers ample opportunity to become interested in boxing. Occasional patronage by the social and political elite gave the sport a respectability never before witnessed, a development that could not have helped but keep the legal authorities at bay. All of these manifestations of British Toronto being won over by boxing in general created a climate in which professional boxing could thrive as never

before. The value placed on boxing by WASP Toronto, however, was very much interwoven with their cultural values. Moral concerns about the sport (and few groups were as moralistic as British Toronto) had to be overcome before these groups could bring themselves to lend their crucial support to it. Professional boxing was very much a commercialized American sport. This made it a pursuit vulnerable to various characteristics deemed unsavoury by those who largely controlled sport in Toronto after the First World War, namely a government commission dominated by men who believed in the tenets of traditional, British amateurism. The linkage of boxing with patriotism toward the British Empire, courage, self-control, sportsmanship, and other traits, allowed professional boxing to become a vehicle for the dissemination of their agenda. For all intents and purposes, professional boxing's reputation was overhauled by Toronto's dominant WASP majority, who attempted to impose upon the game their amateur vision of sport.

Toronto's British establishment, as well as the GM saw what it wanted to see in boxing in the 1920's and 1930's. The sport that was accepted by the Ontario Athletic Commission (which was largely the embodiment of the values of Toronto's British establishment toward sport), was not really professional boxing at all. What British Toronto's political and sport governing elite embraced was an idealized vision of what it thought and wanted boxing (and all sport) to still be,

an amateur-like pursuit which would personify and instil the qualities and traits reflective of Canada's mother country. This vision would prove to be incompatible with the real commercial nature of the sport. The mainstream support, however, of boxing in general, still facilitated the quality of boxing and quantity of boxers and made for a golden age for professional boxing between the wars.

### Chapter 3

#### Down for the Count, 1940-93

Between 1920 and 1939, professional boxing had enjoyed a golden age in Toronto. The sport was tremendously popular because of the support it received from individuals in Toronto's dominant, British mainstream society. Beginning in the 1940's, the sport's popularity began to decline, a process that has continued steadily to today. Toronto was still a British city in terms of both population and political power<sup>206</sup>. The essential support of middle and upper class British Toronto disappeared almost overnight, and with it vanished much of the sport's presence. The boxing cards offered after 1940 deteriorated steadily and did little to revive the sport. It was not poor boxers and matches, however, that put the sport down for the count. The primary factor relegating the sport to a small, almost forgotten corner of the Toronto sport scene was British Toronto's perception of the sport, a view considerably different from between the wars. Professional boxing, which had never been

---

<sup>206</sup>As late as 1967, two-thirds of Toronto's population was still of British descent. See West, p. 293. The names of elected Toronto M.P.P.'s pulled from the 1940's onward reveals that, whatever Toronto's changing population, the overwhelming majority of legislators sitting for Toronto at Queen's Park were still of British descent. With the exception of Yaremko and Luckock, almost all of the names of elected politicians sounded "WASP-ish": Murphy, Scott, Collings, MacLeod, Walters, Frost, Duckworth, Park, Kerr, Blackwell, Dunlop, Drew, Temple, Cowling, Stewart, Fell, Millen, Macauley, Dennison, Weaver, Price, Porter, Roberts, Leavens, Rea and Fishleigh. See Lewis, pp. 421-505.

as "morally cleansed" as the OAC and the GM would have liked to believe in the 1920's, became especially prone to corruption in this period. Toronto in the 1940's came to realize that the sport's intrinsic nature was inconsistent with its moral values, and was likely to remain that way. The sport's dubious nature was very much in evidence, and both the media and local sport fans did not like what they saw. It was increasingly questionable whether fans would get their money's worth from patronizing local cards. As the sport itself generated a climate of suspicion, promoters found it difficult to attract large crowds even when the quality was quite good. Local fans were becoming much more discriminating consumers of boxing. They had always responded to elite calibre or championship matches and continued to do so after 1940, but such events had nothing to do with local boxing and did nothing to regenerate it. The moral distance that local fans maintained from the sport manifested itself in the slow death of live boxing cards. This disdain was paralleled by a persistent, and seemingly contradictory, interest in American boxing promotions. Toronto came to look southward for whatever boxing entertainment it occasionally wanted to see, such entertainment being provided by a technological advance that could bring the most important fights to fans across North America. This technological advance made a revitalization of local boxing even less likely.

Canada's entry into the Second World War ended the golden age of professional boxing in Toronto. Its presence dropped dramatically during the conflict overseas and, notwithstanding a modest rebound in the late 1940's, continued to fall over the next five decades. The number of cards staged and yearly volume of fans never again approached what they had been in the late 1920's and 1930's<sup>207</sup>. In those periods, peaks of 28 and 29 cards per year were reached, as were yearly volumes of fans well in excess of 150,000 spectators with most promotions taking place at Toronto's largest venues. From the 1940's forward, it was almost unheard of for there to be an average of more than one card per month<sup>208</sup>. There were seldom as

---

<sup>207</sup>The number of cards cited in The Globe and Mail never approached the figures of the late 1920's and late 1930's, the number dropping from 12 in 1941 to one in 1945, a rebound to 10 in 1946, further declines to eight in 1949 and five in 1953, six in 1957, five in 1961, three in 1965 and 1969, seven in 1973, five in 1977, eight in 1985 and one in 1993.

<sup>208</sup>There were the following number of cards reported on by The Globe and Mail in the following years: twelve in 1941 (January 28, February 19 & 26, March 19, April 15 & 23, May 13, June 17 & 25, October 29, November 11 & 25; ten in 1946 (January 22, March 27, April 17, May 1 & 28, June 8, September 6 & 17, October 21 & November 25); eight in 1949 (March 2, May 10, July 27, September 20, October 25, November 15, December 6 & 13); five in 1953 (January 6, February 10, April 21 & 28, June 9); six in 1957 (January 15, March 5 & 26, April 23, September 10 & December 10); five in 1961 (March 14 & 28, June 28, October 3 & December 5); three in 1965 (April 20, June 7 & November 2); three in 1969 (April 26, May 22 & November 4); seven in 1973 (February 13, April 12, May 2, July 17, August 16, September 23 & October 12); five in 1977 (January 19, March 8, November 2, December 9 & 14); eight in 1985 (February 13, March 27, April 30, June 1, July 24, September 11 & 20, December 3) and two or three in 1993 (one card cited on March 19, Deputy Athletic Commissioner for Ontario informed over the phone there were either two or three total for the whole year).



many as 50,000 tickets (and eventually far less) sold for the sport in any year<sup>209</sup>, and the cards eventually (by the late 1960's) disappeared from Toronto's prestigious Maple Leaf Gardens and Mutual Arena<sup>210</sup>. Toronto fell far behind Montreal as a Canadian boxing centre over these five decades<sup>211</sup>. When one considers that the sport's first and greatest decline happened between 1938 (29 cards) and 1945 (a single promotion<sup>212</sup>), it is tempting to conclude that boxing

---

<sup>209</sup>The total projected attendances for the years analyzed were: 1941 (48,400), 1946 (41,900), 1949 (38,200), 1953 (25,200), 1957 (24,900), 1961 (26,213), 1965 (19,380). In the following years, there were numerous cards in which the crowd size was not cited in The Globe and Mail. This, combined with the fact that there were more cards being staged in venues with unknown capacities, makes meaningful predictions as to the total yearly attendance impossible. The individual crowd figures in those years were as follows: 1969 (1,500, 167), 1973 (4,500, 5,500, 5,500, 8,285, 3,000), 1977 (5,000, 1,500, 500) and 1985 (300).

<sup>210</sup>In the first half of this 53 year span, promoters were able and willing to continue booking Maple Leaf Gardens for their cards, with 44 of 49 cited in the years analyzed (1941, 1946, 1949, 1953, 1957, 1961 and 1965) unfolding there. After the mid-1960's, however, professional boxing events came to be held in much smaller venues, the sport only making a last, brief reappearance there in 1973. One of the most common venues for boxing promotions by the 1980's was the St. Lawrence Market, a small club venue described as "grubby" by Brunt (p. 205). See Appendix A for a comprehensive listing of where Toronto cards have been staged.

<sup>211</sup>Between 1940 and 1993, The Ring correspondents for Montreal cited 109 crowd figures totalling 679,260 spectators, an average of 6,232 per event. Only 65 attendances were cited for Toronto professional shows, totalling 273,325 fans, an average of 4,205 fans.

<sup>212</sup>Initially, a complete analysis of The Globe and Mail in 1945 did not uncover a single professional boxing show taking place. On January 15, 1946, however, this newspaper wrote that the first professional card in 9 months was about to transpire in Toronto, placing at least one such event in April of 1945. This professional show (although never found despite repeated searches through this month) is inferred to be the only one for the entire

was crippled by the massive social and economic changes that were transforming Canada at the time. No evidence could be found, however, that the war itself undermined the sport. The war did not completely suspend either professional football or hockey. Although the Big Four rugby football league and the National Hockey League felt the adverse impact of the war years, the former only suspended play for the 1942 to 1944 seasons and the latter continued operations throughout the conflict<sup>213</sup>. To hypothesize that boxing in general may have been affected moreso than the above sports, or that Toronto boxing specifically was hurt more than in other Canadian cities by the war is also not supported by the evidence. The year 1941, when Canada had already been at war for 16 months, saw 12 cards staged in Toronto and 53,000 fans in attendance, figures that would exceed almost all subsequent years in the next five decades. Furthermore, every major Canadian city, not just Toronto, contributed thousands of young, able-bodied men (who might otherwise have been boxing) and endured increasingly harsh rationing<sup>214</sup> (saving money that might otherwise have gone to buy boxing tickets) as the war

---

year.

<sup>213</sup>Currie, p. 102 & McFarlane, B. (1967). Fifty Years of Hockey, 1917-67: An Intimate History of the National Hockey League. Toronto: Pagurian, pp. 75-87.

<sup>214</sup>Granatstein, J. L. & Morton, D. (1989). A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War, 1939-45. Toronto: Denny's, p. 58.

progressed. Professional boxing did not disappear in other Canadian locales as completely as it did in Toronto by 1945. In that year, Sorel and Montreal staged several shows, their attendance indicating enthusiastic support of the sport in Quebec<sup>215</sup>. When one considers that cards were staged in Montreal within a year of the war's end that drew crowds of 10,000 and 14,750<sup>216</sup>, while the persistent efforts of Toronto promoters to revive the sport were meeting with frustration<sup>217</sup>, it is clear that there was far more to boxing's decline in the latter city than merely the war.

Lastly, the resurgence of amateur boxing's popularity during this period refutes the idea that the war damaged boxing generally. The amateur game equalled the professional version in popularity, and had surpassed it by the war's end. In January and February, 1940, six amateur shows at Maple Leaf Gardens attracted 11,900 spectators<sup>218</sup>, a decent total compared to the 18,875 fans who attended the three professional shows in that two month span. In January and February of 1941, amateur cards drew crowds of 2,000, 1,500,

---

<sup>215</sup>The Globe and Mail in 1945 cited professional boxing cards in Sorel (January 29, 5,000 fans) and Montreal (September 3: 6,200, November 3: 7,500).

<sup>216</sup>Ibid. , June 8 & August 29, 1946.

<sup>217</sup>In 1946, there were cards staged in Toronto that drew crowds as small as 2,200 and 1,200, The Globe and Mail, May 1 & June 8.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid. , January 9, 16, 23 & 30, February 13 and 27.

and 3,000 to the Coliseum and local military depots<sup>219</sup>. By 1943, such shows were regular events at Massey Hall, where crowds of 1,600, 2,800, 3,000 and 1,800 were cited in the first two months<sup>220</sup>. No professional cards were staged in the first two months of 1944, but there were five Massey Hall amateur events<sup>221</sup>. In 1945, the Massey Hall shows were a major attraction, owing partially to the emergence of a 17-year-old local sensation named Arthur King. In that year's first 17 weeks, there were 11 amateur cards, several featuring King, and most taking place in front of near sell-out crowds<sup>222</sup>. Although these Massey Hall crowds were much smaller than average professional crowds<sup>223</sup>, their frequency predicted a considerably larger year's attendance than the

---

<sup>219</sup>Ibid. , January 15 & 22, February 5, 1941. The military theme of some of these amateur promotions raises the question whether they were more about military readiness (in the same manner that boxing was so popular a physical activity with the Canadian Army during the First World War) than they were about commercial entertainment. During the last three years of the war, however, it is clear that amateur cards fit the latter description, as they took place at Massey Hall in front of enthusiastic civilian audiences. Whatever the motivation for amateur boxing cards in Toronto during the early war years, the sport eventually became a thriving commercial attraction.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid. , January 12 & 26, February 9 & 23, 1943.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid. , January 11 & 18, February 1, 15 & 29.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid. , January 9, 16 & 30, February 13, 20 & 27, March 6, 13 & 20, April 3 & 10, 1945. The show cited on January 16 was cited as having a crowd of 2,200 on hand, with several of the other articles implying attendances near, or at capacity.

<sup>223</sup>Ibid. , June 8, 1946. The previous night's boxing show saw Massey Hall half empty with only 1,200. It is thus assumed that the capacity of the Hall was approximately 2,500.

lone professional card could have generated. Toronto fans had both the money and inclination to attend boxing shows, even at the very end of the war. They were simply choosing amateur boxing over professional boxing.

Not only did the advent of amateur boxing during the Second World War disprove the notion that the war itself permanently undermined the sport, its continued superior appeal after the war hinted at the real factor shaping the depletion of professional boxing's audience. The charitable Newsboy Show attracted larger crowds than professional shows in this era<sup>224</sup>. Six amateur cards unfolded in Massey Hall in the first three months of 1946 alone<sup>225</sup>, when there were only two professional cards. By 1949, support for the amateur sport had grown even stronger, with weekly or bi-weekly cards at the Gardens in front of many more fans than were attending

---

<sup>224</sup>The last twenty-two Newsboy shows (1940 and 1961) attracted an average of 5,204 spectators, whereas 46 cited professional crowds cited in the six years analyzed over this time span averaged only 4,548 fans. One can read about the Newsboy show in The Globe and Mail during this era on the following dates: May 7, 1940: 3,800, May 6, 1941: 4,300, May 5, 1942: 4,000, May 4, 1943: 6,000, May 9, 1944: 7,000, May 15, 1945: 7,000, May 7, 1946: 6,000, May 6, 1947: 6,000, May 18, 1948: 5,000, May 31, 1949: 6,000, May 17, 1950: 6,500, May 22, 1951: 5,400, February 12, 1952: 4,000, February 17, 1953: 6,500, February 15, 1955: 6,000, February 14, 1956: 6,500, February 12, 1957: 7,000, February 11, 1958: 4,500, February 17, 1959: 6,000, February 9, 1960: 5,000, February 14, 1961: 1,981. These 22 amateur shows averaged 5,204 fans. The 46 professional shows cited in 1941 (12 cards: 52,800 fans), 1946 (10 cards, 41,900 fans), 1949 (eight cards, 38,200 fans), 1953 (five cards, 25,200 fans) 1957 (six cards, 24,900), 1961 (five cards, 26,213 fans) totalled 209,213 spectators, an average of only 4,548 spectators.

<sup>225</sup>The Globe and Mail reported on Massey Hall amateur cards on January 8 & 15, February 12 & 19, March 12 & 19, 1946.

professional cards<sup>226</sup>. Where there were only five professional cards in all of 1953, 19 amateur promotions were held in the year's first three months<sup>227</sup>! Even though they were, by then, being held in smaller venues (the Palace Pier and East York Arena), the staging of two amateur cards per week suggests that amateur boxing was still drawing a greater yearly total of fans<sup>228</sup>. The East York Arena amateur cards, not professional promotions, were broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the first boxing events ever televised in Canada<sup>229</sup>. Clearly, many Toronto fans perceived amateur cards as more enjoyable than professional cards. The weekly GM advertisement in 1946 for tickets to amateur cards was not exaggerating in its statement, "The Best Fights of All-Go At Massey Hall". The GM agreed, speculating in both 1946 and in 1949 that the amateur cards provided much more

---

<sup>226</sup>The Globe and Mail cites six amateur promotions taking place in 1949 at the Gardens in January (4, 11, 18 & 25) and February (8 & 22) alone, totalling 18,100 spectators. In all of 1949, an estimated total of only 38,200 fans attended the 8 professional cards in Toronto.

<sup>227</sup>Ibid. , Amateur shows were staged on the following dates: January 7, 14 (2), 21 (2), February 3, 4, 11, 18, 24 & 25, March 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25 & 31). Ten of the 19 cards were held at the East York Arena, nine were staged at the Palace Pier.

<sup>228</sup>13 of the 19 cards had their crowd figures cited in The Globe and Mail. All of the 13 crowds were between 400 and 700, suggesting the capacity of these two venues may not have been much larger than that. With an average crowd of 508 fans, the projected total for all 19 cards in the first quarter of the year was 9,646, a figure suggesting a far greater year's attendance total for amateur boxing than the 25,200 spectators who patronized the five professional promotions in 1953.

<sup>229</sup>The Globe and Mail, January 7, 1946.

exciting action for the money than professional events<sup>230</sup>. The newspaper further speculated that Deacon Allen (promoter of both amateur and professional cards) had inadvertently undercut the professional sport by promoting so many amateur cards during the war that offered more excitement and lower prices than the typical professional promotion<sup>231</sup>.

This transference of crowd support from professional boxing to amateur cards beginning during the Second World War, testified to a change in the way Torontonians perceived the former. To whatever degree middle and upper-class British Toronto had rationalized and reinterpreted professional boxing in the 1920's and 1930's so as to make it more palatable to their values, there was no more pretense from the 1940's onward about the sport's nature. Torontonians looked upon boxing with much more realism from this decade onward.

In this period, the American dominance over boxing continued, particularly in the 1940's and 1950's<sup>232</sup>. There is no shortage of evidence portraying professional boxing (with America as its constant epicentre) as being replete with irregularities, dishonesty and corruption from the 1940's

---

<sup>230</sup>Ibid. , May 2, 1946, & February 8, 1949.

<sup>231</sup>The Globe and Mail, March 28, 1946. Jim Coleman suggests Allen's successful amateur cards were so entertaining and so favourably priced, the professional game could only suffer by comparison.

<sup>232</sup>From 1940 to 1983, 44% (113 of 255) of world boxing champions were American, and 59% (565 of 965) of the world title fights staged in the United States. Figures were compiled using the The Ring: 1984 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia.

onward. After the Second World War, a virtual stranglehold was held over the sport for a decade by an organization known as the International Boxing Guild<sup>233</sup>. From the late 1940's to the late 1950's, this body's control over boxing was characterized by the bribing of boxers to lose fights, the bribing of judges by gamblers, and the epidemic presence of boxing managers with criminal backgrounds. The IBC's intimidating stewardship over the sport was compounded by the growing influence exacted over its president (Jim Norris) by the Mafia, which controlled the contacts of most of American's top boxers<sup>234</sup>. In the 1950's, it became common knowledge that ruthless mobster Frankie Carbo had the entire sport of boxing in America under his thumb<sup>235</sup>. Even after the American government broke the grip of organized crime over boxing in the late 1950's, the sport continued to the 1990's to be beset by dubious practises and administration. The most powerful boxing promoters in the world for many years, Don King and Bob Arum, were equally well-known for business practises that ranged from ruthlessly shrewd to underhanded. Arum has been described by many boxing contemporaries as an individual who lies easily and often to gain an advantage over

---

<sup>233</sup>Sammons, p. 138.

<sup>234</sup>Powers, R. (1984). Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports. New York: Coward-McCann, p. 104.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid.



those with whom he deals<sup>236</sup>. King is a former street hoodlum and ex-convict who served five years in prison for manslaughter<sup>237</sup>. His influence has manifested itself, at times, in a stranglehold over the best boxers in the world<sup>238</sup>, and a well-earned reputation of swindling those who come in contact with him<sup>239</sup>. That these two men came to wield the most influence in the boxing world by the 1970's leaves little doubt that boxing was as much (if not moreso) a business than a sport.

More of the shadiness that has continued to characterize boxing has been witnessed in the sport's numerous world governing bodies, like the World Boxing Association (WBA), the World Boxing Council (WBC) and the International Boxing Federation (IBF). The administration of the sport by these bodies has been generally acknowledged to be rampant with political peddling, bribery and nepotism for many years. It has been suggested that the WBA is little more than a corrupt joke, an organization willing to bestow its sanction for bouts in exchange for cash bribes<sup>240</sup>. The president of the WBC has been charged with smuggling priceless artifacts and accused of

---

<sup>236</sup>Hauser, p. 71.

<sup>237</sup>Ibid. , p. 74.

<sup>238</sup>Brunt, p. 110 & 115.

<sup>239</sup>Christy, p. 31,

<sup>240</sup>Ibid. , p. 59.

extortion<sup>241</sup>. The two organizations have been described by boxing analysts as "nickel and dime outfits" running the sport "for their own aggrandizement<sup>242</sup>."

The cynical control exerted over boxing by the above bodies has been paralleled by the ongoing lack of political will of the Canadian and American federal governments to enact the necessary changes to make the sport both safer for participants and more honest for the spectator. Professional boxing continued throughout this period to be regulated differently by dozens of provincial and state agencies, a scenario undermining any chance of effective regulatory control<sup>243</sup>. On both sides of the border, federal investigations have been conducted to identify the sport's troubles, and legislative proposals put forward to reform the sport's image. The findings and recommendations of the Canadian government spoke volumes as to what the perception of boxing has been for decades.

Regrettably, professional boxing generally in Canada and in other parts of the world has not significantly improved its safety measures, its organization, its morality nor its public appeal. The Task Force has, both privately and publicly, been told of instances of corruptness, dishonesty or financial greed being allowed to occur, with the

---

<sup>241</sup>Ibid. , p. 60.

<sup>242</sup>Hauser, p. 94.

<sup>243</sup>Brunt, p. 132, states that the many commissions in Canadian provinces and American states "operate independently rather than co-operatively, they have little power beyond enforcing local rules and regulations, and often even those responsibilities are undertaken haphazardly."

safety of the boxer not always being the prime consideration. Several comments implied directly or indirectly that the profit motive had engendered a number of "shady deals" particularly among managers and others, to the detriment of boxers. This situation has allowed deaths and serious injuries to continue and has provided further fresh ammunition for the anti-boxing lobby. It is for these reasons that many of the recommendations of the Task Force pertain to specific changes in the practice of many aspects of professional boxing<sup>244</sup>.

Neither the recommendations of the Canadian Gosse Report, nor the legislation proposed in the United States to create a national boxing governing body, ever became law<sup>245</sup>. Both governments have demonstrated little concerted interest in reforming the sport. Boxing in America, like Canada, continues to be "governed" in a manner that ranges from comical to tragic.

At present 43 states and the District of Columbia have some form of athletic commission... In two states regulation is at the county or city level.

---

<sup>244</sup>Findings of the Federal Task Force on Boxing in Canada, The Gosse Report, January 28, 1981. The mention of the term, "anti-boxing lobby" by the Task Force raises the possibility that the declining fortunes of professional boxing throughout much of Canada may have been the result of proactive efforts on the part of those who ethically opposed the sport. There is ample evidence, however, that the individuals involved in boxing have been more than capable of running their sport into the ground without outside intervention. As Nat Fleischer, founder of The Ring once stated, "The most insidious and dangerous enemies of boxing have not been foes from without, but the terrible breakers-down on the inside. The most serious threats to boxing always have come from within." See Hauser, p. 57. The most recent North American campaign to abolish boxing did not pick up strength until the mid-1980's, when medical organizations like the American and Canadian Medical Associations went on public record calling for the criminalization of the sport. Long before this, boxing's image had been tarnished by the behaviour of those promoting and administering the sport.

<sup>245</sup>Brunt, p. 133.

Five states have no public regulation at all. The result is a frightening mishmash of rules...with widely divergent safeguards...Commission record keeping is erratic. No one knows how many licensed boxers there are in the United States...Many states don't even have a complete set of rules...gathered in one place for official use<sup>246</sup>.

Such has been the ongoing nature of professional boxing in general, a sport where greed rules, exploitation is rampant, effective regulation is non-existent, and the interests of fans and the well-being of boxers are of small concern. The above examples, which provide an overview of the wrongdoing involved in the sport, were as representative of boxing (and the way it was perceived) in Toronto specifically as in North America generally. The sport in Toronto from the 1940's onward was as much as ever, intertwined with the larger, imposing, and dominant reality of the sport south of the border. American boxers were still regarded as the best in the world<sup>247</sup>. It was still necessary for elite calibre Toronto fighters to move their careers to the United States or compete against America's best if they wanted to win a world title or make the largest possible purses<sup>248</sup>. Local cards

---

<sup>246</sup>Hauser, p. 59.

<sup>247</sup>The Globe and Mail, January 14, 1949. Just as Sammy Luftspring had observed in the 1930's, Arthur King remarked that the best boxers, by far, were those in America.

<sup>248</sup>One of the best Toronto boxers after World War Two was Arthur King, who commenced his professional career in 1946 after a brilliant amateur career fighting on Massey Hall cards. In less than three years, the talented King had to abandon Toronto for lack of competition. The lightweight moved his career to the greener pastures of Philadelphia. See Obodiac, p. 53. Heavyweight George

continued to be heavily dependent on boxers from the United States<sup>249</sup>, with many of them hailing from across Lake Ontario<sup>250</sup>. Toronto boxers also experienced first-hand the sinister machinations of American boxing interests. With his quest for a world title going nowhere in Toronto, Arthur King was compelled to sign his future away to the ruthless Mafia crimelord Blinky Palermo, in the hope that Palermo would use his all-powerful "connections" to land the Toronto fighter a shot at the world title<sup>251</sup>. Tragically, King would never be given the opportunity he deserved as a result of Palermo's

---

Chualo found in the 1960's that his best opportunities to make large purses were when he fought in New York's Madison Square Garden. The Toronto fighter earned purses of \$62,000, \$58,000 and \$40,000 when he battled Floyd Patterson (1965), Joe Frazier (1967) and Buster Mathis (1969) in this venue. Very seldom did Chualo make anywhere near this much fighting in his hometown. See The Globe and Mail, February 4, 1969. Furthermore, whereas only one of his first 25 bouts were in America (1956-1961), 26 of his last 63 fights (1963-77), when he was an established world contender near the top of the heavyweight division were in the United States. Most of Chualo's important and lucrative bouts were among these matches. In fact, the \$40,000 purse for his 1965 bout with Patterson in Madison Square Garden was more money than Chualo had ever made in any year fighting mostly in Toronto!

<sup>249</sup>In the ten years for which a complete analysis of The Globe and Mail was done on boxing activity between 1940 and 1993 (1941, 1946, 1949, 1953, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1969, 1973, 1977 & 1977) the breakdown of different individual boxers fighting at least once in Toronto reveals that 38% (158 of 416) were American.

<sup>250</sup>Of the 158 American boxers competing in Toronto in the above years, 71 were from New York state, (New York: 32, Buffalo: 22, Syracuse: 11, Rochester: 7, Niagara Fall: 2, Albany: 1, Erie: 1, Lackawanna: 1, Utica: 1, Lockport: 1), with 62 more from Pennsylvania (15), Detroit (17), Ohio (20), Chicago (3), Indianapolis (2), Boston (5). Fifteen more were from Detroit (5), Cleveland (4) or Pennsylvania (6).

<sup>251</sup>Batten, p. 73.

efforts to keep the world title in the hands of other boxers in his stable. By holding King's contract for over a decade, he effectively eliminated a potential challenger who might wrest the world championship from the mobster's grasp<sup>252</sup>. Another Toronto fighter, Joey Bagnato, witnessed first-hand the power over the sport wielded by American organized crime over the sport. On at least two occasions when he was fighting in the States, Bagnato was instructed to throw a bout or face terrifying consequences. Throughout his career, he was often exploited by the Mafia which controlled American boxing from the 1930's to 1950's<sup>253</sup>. Often, Bagnato would receive no more reimbursement for his fights than money to cover his expenses. Toronto Light-Heavyweight James Parker's world title bid was undermined when his handlers fearfully acquiesced to the warnings of American Archie Moore's manager, Jack Kearns. Kearns "ordered" Parker's camp to instruct their boxer to fight in a way that would minimize his chances of victory, and the Toronto boxer was knocked out in front of a hometown audience<sup>254</sup>.

It was against this backdrop of corruption, well known in Toronto, that the city's support of boxing declined after the Second World War. One scholar has identified boxing's

---

<sup>252</sup>Gladman, J. (October, 1973). Canadian Pro-Am Boxing Magazine. p. 15.

<sup>253</sup>Batten, p. 72.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid. , p. 73.

undeniable linkage with organized crime in the United States as a major factor in the sport's disappearing popularity in Canada<sup>233</sup>. Unregulated and vulnerable to unscrupulous goings-on which could victimize both boxers and the ticket-buying public, the sport was recognized for what it was, and not what British Toronto had earlier wanted and pretended. The coverage of professional boxing by the GM and The Ring provided ample testimony to the unsavoury commercial excesses of the sport between 1940 and 1993, as well as the increasing alienation between it and Toronto.

The change in the GM's perspective of professional boxing manifested itself in several ways. The newspaper harshly criticized the quality of local promotions, portrayed local promoters in a dubious light, and distanced itself from the sport when it was not openly opposing it. The common theme running through the GM's souring perspective of boxing over the last five decades, whether subtle or direct, was that the newspaper was less willing to allow its pages to be used to promote a form of entertainment it believed was generally prone to deception, and replete with unsavoury figures, inside and outside the ring. The Second World War was barely over before the GM was demonstrating a perspective of professional boxing diametrically opposed to its earlier mindset. The year 1946 saw this newspaper, which had scarcely a bad word to say about boxing itself between the wars, portraying the sport as

---

<sup>233</sup>Donnelly, p. 76.

a dubious profession which should scarcely be trusted by sport fans. One writer continually satirized Toronto's promoters, as immoral, shrewd, avaricious, "Damon Runyon-type" figures<sup>256</sup>. Playfair Brown renewed his promotional license in 1946 after a seven year absence from the sport. GM columnist Jim Coleman wrote contemptuously of Brown, alluding to the ticket prices he had charged Toronto fans in the past. Repeated references were made to Brown with variations of his nickname "Playfair", the author calling him "Fair-Deal Brown", "Square-Deal Brown", "Fifty-Fifty Brown", "Forty-Sixty Brown", "Square-Break Brown", "No Agents Please Brown", "Fair-Play Brown", and "Even-Stephen Brown." The sarcastic innuendo in these nicknames was unmistakable, the author implying that Brown was a dishonest businessman<sup>257</sup>. Coleman wrote later that a card proposed by Brown had been cancelled, rightly the columnist thought, because the Garden's management was suspicious of the fights he was proposing, and sought to protect the interests of local fans<sup>258</sup>. This was the same promoter whom the GM had so lavishly praised in 1929 for his efforts in bringing boxing to Toronto. Seventeen years later,

---

<sup>256</sup>Damon Runyon was an early twentieth century American newspaper columnist turned novelist. He focussed much of his fictional writing toward the depiction of shady, small-time hoodlums, and other sinister underworld figures. In many of Runyan's stories, these figures inhabited the world of sport. See: D'Itri, P. W. (1982). Damon Runyon. Boston: Twayne, preface page.

<sup>257</sup>The Globe and Mail, March 15, 1946.

<sup>258</sup>Ibid. , July 9, 1946.



the newspaper was portraying him derisively, as an individual intent only on personal gain.

Sam Keller was another target for Coleman's derision. He portrayed this promoter as a businessman who could swindle anyone, an individual capable of gouging out a client's eyeball, replacing it with a grape, then convincing them that their eyesight had improved<sup>259</sup>.

Deacon Allen was portrayed no less charitably. The journalist facetiously wrote that Allen was liable to cut off one of his boxer's fists in order for him to pass the mandatory weigh-in and ensure Brown's profit would not be lost. Coleman accused Allen of trading in his ethics for a car years earlier and concluded by emphasizing he would not bet on the outcome of Allen's upcoming card<sup>260</sup>. Later, the sportswriter ruminated that Allen would stage an outdoor boxing show after dark in a venue with no lights, as long as he could get the fans through the turnstiles<sup>261</sup>. Allen's promotional assistant, a curious character named Levinsky, was repeatedly ridiculed throughout the year as a crude, illiterate, mouth-breathing thug<sup>262</sup>. Coleman's feelings about Toronto's promoters were most vividly illustrated in an article in which he described a presumably fictitious

---

<sup>259</sup>Ibid. , April 30 & December 7, 1946.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid. , June 24, 1946.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid. , July 24, 1946

<sup>262</sup>Ibid. , January 3, February 16 & May 17, 1946.

encounter in which they were sitting in a dark theatre examining boxing films, all of them conscious of guarding their wallets from each other<sup>263</sup>. Other Coleman articles left the impression that the sport had always been dishonest and seedy, referring to boxing as a racket, a mug's game, and its history as being seamy<sup>264</sup>. His perception appeared a prevalent one in Toronto when one learns that Provincial Treasurer Leslie Frost casually referred to professional boxing as a "racket or act" in the Legislature. This statement prompted yet another Coleman article, in which he facetiously described Allen as being outraged at such a portrayal and contemplating legal action<sup>265</sup>.

Equally indicative of this newspaper's change of perspective was a proposed 1946 bout in which local boxer Joey Bagnato would fight the legendary World Featherweight Champion, American Willie Pep. The GM sport page published an editorial revealing a position that would have been unthinkable in the 1920's.

If the match is ratified, The Globe and Mail will report the training activities of the men and detail such other news as may concern it. But this paper will not be a party to any attempt to suggest that Bagnato has a reasonable chance of winning<sup>266</sup>.

---

<sup>263</sup>Ibid. , June 14, 1946.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid. , July 1, 27 & December 17, 1946.

<sup>265</sup>Ibid. , March 14, 1949.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid. , August 5, 1946.

The GM saw this fight as a ridiculous mismatch, a fraud that should not be perpetrated on the people of Toronto. It washed its hands of the promotion. Between the wars, the GM had never gone so far as to distance itself from a card.

The integrity of boxers themselves was also more of an issue in this newspaper's commentary. The efforts of two fighters competing on a card earlier could not fool the GM any more than the referee or the fans, the newspaper speculating that the two boxers deserved to have their purses withheld for not trying, and that promoters had reason to never match two Negro boxers again<sup>267</sup>. Especially insightful was the following passage about the same debacle. "*Toronto fight fans are too ring wise for that sort of thing. They know when a fight is on the up and up*<sup>268</sup>." This prevailing suspicion toward the sport had not been in evidence in the GM's reporting since the early 1920's. Three years later, a GM passage further indicated that it thought less highly of boxing promotions, although this example had more to do with the character of the sport's audience than spectators being bilked of their money by lousy matches. After the largest

---

<sup>267</sup>The Globe and Mail's insinuation that the two Negro boxers cheated the customers by going easy on each other, out of racial comraderie, and its resulting conclusion that local promoters (with The Globe and Mail's seemingly in agreement) would never match Black boxers again, has an obvious racial dimension to it. It is impossible to determine whether this newspaper was more or less racist in this assumption that Black boxers could not be trusted to fight honestly, than Toronto society in general.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid. , January 22, 1946,

crowd of 1949 had attended a novice professional tournament at the Gardens, the newspaper reflected that "...a crowd of 10,000 stood and cheered with unrestrained joy". And a word of praise for the spectators- it was the *best behaved* and most appreciative audience we've ever seen at a professional show"<sup>269</sup>. The GM was pleasantly surprised at a well-behaved professional boxing crowd, indicating that it was the perceived norm for such spectators to be unruly. By calling it the best behaved crowd the GM had ever witnessed, one must wonder how selective the newspaper's perceptions were when it was writing usually glowing reports about cards in the late 1920's, when there was scarcely a mention of crowd behaviour.

An article reporting on another card in 1949 further indicated the newspaper was no longer a cheerleader for the sport. The headline read, "Dismal Efforts of U.S. Boxers Ruins Pro Card", the story placing considerable skepticism on the four American boxer's performances<sup>270</sup>.

The GM's coldness toward boxing was as much, if not more in evidence in the mid-1960's. Irv Ungerman promoted a 1965 card in which Chuvalo fought a tune-up bout against an unheralded Nebraskan, Bill Neilsen. The match drew a crowd of only 5,980 to the Gardens. When reporters asked Ungerman afterward if he still planned a more lucrative local match for Chuvalo later that year, Ungerman bitterly responded that the

---

<sup>269</sup>Ibid. , September 20, 1949.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid. , May 10, 1949.

city had not demonstrated enough support to deserve such a bout. The GM's answer to Ungerman's statement was far removed from its enthusiastic articles of the late 1920's. Columnist Dick Beddoes was writing from a perspective no more complementary of boxing promoters than Jim Coleman had been two decades earlier.

There was no intention of a reference to boxing in this space for a third successive day, and then one of the high priests of local pugdom tilted mightily at the Toronto public...Ungerman's remarks merit a published rebuttal...The press wondered if Chuvalo would appear in Toronto in a rematch against Floyd Patterson, an enticing prospect that has been mentioned for June. Ungerman expressed contempt for Toronto as a site for the return strife. "This city didn't prove it would support a big fight like that." That seems a cavalier approach for a man whose private business depends in big measure on the goodwill of the Toronto public...The entire tone of the Chuvalo-Neilsen promotion was arrogant. Toronto was on trial: to prove they deserved to see Patterson later, fight fans were obliged to flock and see Neilsen now. We were asked to be gulled and manipulated as so many suckers. Nothing for me, thanks...One of the customer's few remaining rights is to say to hell with what he considers shabby merchandise...That stuff about Toronto fans having to prove themselves, that syrup doesn't pour here. The big-league entertainments draw, as the receipts for NHL hockey and horse-racing prove. There is a crowd support even when the entertainment isn't particularly big-league...I give you the Toronto Argonauts. Promoters ought to be reminded, however, that they aren't above criticism. Or that their promotions aren't anything like a civic enterprise, any more than Mr. Ungerman's admirable poultry business is<sup>271</sup>.

Beddoes' opening remark expressing his aversion to writing about boxing three days in a row was especially contemptuous. The writer, purportedly speaking on behalf of

---

<sup>271</sup>The Globe and Mail, April 21, 1965.

Toronto sport fans, felt Ungerman had no right to expect support for his promotions if their quality was suspect.

The newspaper singled out another promotion that year as a fraud inflicted on Toronto. As had been the case in the late 1940's, the controversy centred around the American boxers on the card.

*A mockery was made of professional boxing yesterday afternoon at Maple Leaf Stadium. Out of condition fighters, over-matched fighters and a parade of last minute substitutes were presented to fewer than 900 fans ...The advertisements listed five bouts and 10 boxers, one of which was King David, the Israeli lightweight champion. But he didn't appear. Neither did five of the others listed on the card...The crowd, which at times jeered the efforts of some of the reluctant pugilists, was told that King David had experienced immigration difficulties at the U.S. border...Reports on the whereabouts of the boxers from Syracuse were conflicting. The Bagnato brothers-Vince, Joey and Charley-said the fighters had pulled out suddenly, leaving the promoters somewhat in a bind<sup>272</sup>.*

The fans had been cheated in the GM's eyes, and the newspaper was not at all shy about making this public knowledge.

In November, 1965, the GM again saw what it did not like in a local card. As George Chuvalo was preparing to challenge Chicago's Ernie Terrell for the World Heavyweight Championship at the Gardens, the newspaper pointedly informed its readers that the promoters of the card had reneged on their promise to arrange high-quality preliminary fights, instead offering an uninspiring undercard (as they had specifically said they

---

<sup>272</sup>Ibid. , June 7, 1965.

would not do) with Chuvalo's and Terrell's sparring partners<sup>273</sup>.

Twelve years later, several GM articles suggested a more general disdain for boxing. Columnist Allen Abel wrote articles depicting boxers being as exploited as horses in a glue factory, the sport in Canada being in a sorry regulatory state, boxing itself being cruel, and an upcoming Nicky Furlano bout as a farce because his American opponent was a 40-year-old grandfather<sup>274</sup>! Another biographical story on Furlano repeatedly focussed on the boxer's lack of education, his working class background, and the sleaziness of the spectators attending his bouts<sup>275</sup>.

No better illustration of the GM's jaded view of boxing was demonstrated than in its reporting of one of George Chuvalo's last bouts in 1977. The aging heavyweight was lured out of semi-retirement to battle fellow Torontonians Bob Felstein at the North York Arena. The performance of both boxers was as sobering an indictment of Canadian boxing in general as it was of Toronto boxing specifically. Local boxing had sunken to an embarrassing level, having become in the GM's eyes a disgusting spectacle.

Blubbery George Chuvalo reclaimed the heavyweight championship of Canada at the age of 39 last night when he knocked out Bob (Pretty Boy) Felstein in

---

<sup>273</sup>Ibid. , October 29, 1965.

<sup>274</sup>Ibid. , May 10, June 10, July 12 & October 28, 1977.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid. , November 9, 1977.

the ninth round of their *pushing, holding and spitting match* at the North York Centennial Centre... A near capacity crowd booed and jeered until Chuvalo dropped Felstein with a flurry of punches midway in the ninth...Referee Harry Davis was the real hero...He spent almost the entire match trying to slip his slim frame between the two flabby fighters. Several times Chuvalo backed Felstein into the ropes and leaned on him, a severe test for the cords...Once, waltzing in a neutral corner, they spat at each other. Another time, they traded insults in the ring.

In the same issue, a GM reporter summed up the night's entertainment, making emphatically clear the moral distance that now separated this newspaper from the sport.

Everyone knew last night's Canadian heavyweight title bout between George Chuvalo and Bob (Pretty Boy) Felstein was a joke-but the more than 5,000 spectators came expecting a punch line. What they got was so pathetic, you couldn't even say it gave the sport a black eye<sup>276</sup>.

The GM described this bout as the same sort of despicable charade that it and the OAC had reviled as the antithesis of proper "sport" in the 1920's. If any doubt remained as to this newspaper's view of boxing by 1977, a lengthy April article made it emphatically clear the GM had opposed the sport for a long time. The story outlined in detail the inept regulation that plagued the sport, and how this resulted in Canadian boxing fans seldom seeing legitimate, high quality boxing cards.

*For decades, The Globe and Mail has been a severe critic of professional boxing in Canada, using words like 'degenerate' and 'brutal' to describe the sport. But such language pales in comparison*

---

<sup>276</sup>Ibid. , March 8, 1977.



to the comments made by boxing people about each other. People involved on all levels of boxing in Canada were surveyed, providing a wide range of opinions on the state of the game. Most agreed that Canadian boxing needs a strong commissioner to control an activity that, if left unattended, can indeed revert to the "bloody nonsense" against which editors and others have long railed<sup>277</sup>.

Since 1977, when writer Allen Abel confirmed the longstanding opposition of his newspaper to boxing, the GM's view has altered little. In 1985, the GM demonstrated more interest in reporting on the seamier side of the sport than actually writing about local cards. Scandals involving an Ohio boxer who, flaunting both Quebec and Ohio safety regulations, fought in Cincinnati and Montreal within 48 hours, and a Montreal promoter convicted for attempting to stage a farcical (and dangerous) match between two former boxers in their 40's, were written about far more extensively than the amount of space devoted to local promotions<sup>278</sup>. By this time, the GM was clearly more comfortable focussing on

---

<sup>277</sup>Ibid. , April 1, 1977.

<sup>278</sup>In 1985, The Globe and Mail ran two stories (February 1 & 12) about Ohio boxer Sammy Gervins boxing twice in three days in the fall of 1984, totalling 322 lines. The newspaper published nine more articles (March 21, May 29, June 7, 8 & 19, July 5, 6, 23 & 24) about the huge legal wrangle that resulted when Montreal promoter Regis Levesgue was charged (and eventually convicted) for attempting to stage a match between Joe Frazier (41) and Robert Cleroux (47) without the permission of Quebec's boxing governing bureaucracy. This ongoing story, another embarrassing black eye for professional boxing in Canada, was covered by the GM with 623 lines. Together, the two scandals received 945 lines of coverage from the GM, more than 200 lines more than the space allocated by the GM (741 lines) to report on local cards.

the skeletons in professional boxing's closet than its value as entertainment.

With such dubious goings-on in both North America generally and Toronto specifically, it is hardly surprising that this particular newspaper came to be less inclined to even report on the sport, for it was still ambivalent toward the mere presence of money in professional sport<sup>279</sup>. It devoted less and less space to boxing over this time span, with smaller articles and fewer stories<sup>280</sup>. In 1985, there

---

<sup>279</sup>A 1968 GM boxing story informs that Athletic Commissioner Merv McKenzie was incensed that an Italian boxer had, in defiance of his warnings, entered the ring with highly visible advertising on his robe. McKenzie was planning on fining the boxer \$500 for "crass commercialism." Interestingly, the GM took an even harsher stance, recommending McKenzie exact a fine of \$1500-2000. Forty years after the newspaper had (grudgingly or otherwise) come to terms with the essential commercial nature of professional boxing, its British, amateur-minded sport philosophy, representative of a bygone age in Toronto sport, was still in evidence. If one of Toronto's major daily newspapers could not abide simple advertising on the back of a boxer's robe, it is hardly surprising it demonstrated increasing contempt toward boxing in this period. The "crass commercialism" that infuriated McKenzie and the GM in 1968, placed within the context of what professional boxing had been about for a long time about, seems rather innocuous. Boxing's unregulated nature made the sport vulnerable to the most extreme forms of commercial abuse, making for developments considerably more unsavoury than advertising on a boxer's back.

<sup>280</sup>The Globe and Mail allocated the following number of stories and lines to local boxing in the following years. In 1941 (81 stories, 5,614 lines), 1946 (109 articles, 6,069 lines), 1949 (74 stories, 4,271 lines), 1953 (47 articles, 2,699 lines), 1957 (54 stories, 4,284 lines), 1961 (64 stories, 4,906 lines), 1965 (36 stories, 3,218 lines), 1969 (6 stories, 394 lines), 1973 (36 stories, 3,226 lines), 1977 (19 stories, 1,308 lines), 1985 (18 stories, 741 lines). When one considers that there were six cards in 1957 and eight in 1985, it is obvious the newspaper was running many fewer stories about upcoming cards than had once been the custom, and the decline was not simply a reflection of there being fewer cards being staged.

were eight cards publicized in this newspaper. On five occasions, the GM simply neglected to report the results the day after they were supposed to have happened. All five of the "missing" cards were confirmed as having gone ahead as scheduled in other sources<sup>281</sup>. This scenario would have been unthinkable in the golden age of boxing. The GM no longer felt obligated to regularly inform its readers about the outcome of local boxing promotions.

Perhaps even more compelling than this newspaper's change of heart was The Ring's increasingly skeptical commentary about the quality of local cards. This magazine, written by and for boxing supporters, was no less vociferous than the GM in its condemnation of shabby cards, often questioning the integrity and motives of promoters for what they were charging fans to see. As early as the 1950's, The Ring's Toronto correspondent was openly criticizing promoters for repeatedly staging mediocre cards to turn a profit with no thought of what the public wanted to see, as well as the lack of effort being put into the nurturing of high-quality amateur boxers who could grow into marketable professional attractions.

Toronto fans are tired of the few locals who are being shown here almost consistently by the promoter who doesn't seem to bother much about what the crowd wants as long as he gets a card together, and the public can't be blamed for staying away in

---

<sup>281</sup>The five cards mentioned by The Globe and Mail but never followed up on were cited on February 13, March 27, April 30, July 24 and December 3, 1985. They were confirmed to have taken place in The Ring (July and October, 1985) and the Toronto Star, February 15, July 25 & December 4, 1985.

ever-increasing numbers. The amateurs are the cradle of boxing and there has been very little encouragements to induce amateur developments<sup>282</sup>.

This dissatisfaction would continue through the next three decades, with the criticism taking an increasingly biting tone. In the early 1970's, the local writer reflected that one of the reasons the sport was at such a low ebb was that promoters were matching "local talent with poor opposition mainly from (the) Ohio, Buffalo, and Detroit areas"<sup>283</sup>. The general lousiness of the American boxers appearing in Toronto was a trend that continued thereafter, and The Ring's reporting became more venomous toward both the boxers themselves, and local promoters for taking spectator's money to witness them compete. One of Clyde Gray's 1973 opponents was a Miami boxer named Roscoe Bell. Toronto boxing fans were informed by the local media that Bell had won 45 of 60 bouts in his career, an impressive record. The Ring discovered that Bell had really lost 38 of 55 fights(!), making him a ridiculous opponent for a boxer of Gray's calibre<sup>284</sup>. Further incidents involving moribund boxers, imported and local, being inflicted on Toronto were exposed by The Ring in the 1970's and 1980's.

The main event turned out to be a 3D affair- dismal,

---

<sup>282</sup>The Ring, April, 1951. Further references in this magazine to the unsatisfactory quality of local promotions were made in the May, 1951 & December, 1953 issues.

<sup>283</sup>Ibid. , September, 1971.

<sup>284</sup>Ibid. , November, 1973.

degrading and disgusting- as two heavyweights..., Toronto's Conroy Nelson and Calgary's Barry Forbes produced a pathetic showing that deteriorated into old-fashioned vaudeville slapstick comedy by the midpoint. Over the ten rounds, Nelson never landed one clean punch on Forbes...Since Forbes, with his comedy effort, raised more laughs the officials gave him the unanimous decision<sup>285</sup>.

At other times, this magazine wrote of the vulnerability of Toronto fans to being cheated even more blatantly by professional boxing. In 1982, a local promoter (the now retired George Chuvalo), a manager, and an Ohio boxer were all suspended by the OAC when it was discovered the fighter who showed up for his pre-fight medical was actually the brother of the boxer who had been publicized<sup>286</sup>.

Occasionally, The Ring's contempt even went beyond the questionable calibre of boxers and promoters who used them. The OAC itself was accused of no longer even trying to effectively regulate the sport and protect the public from commercial fraud.

The circus was back in town in the form of a professional fight card...The feature attraction...was Sylvester Wilder, Ohio, who in five years of action from 1973 to 1978 had appeared in 26 bouts, of which he had lost 16 by knockout and nine by decision...Arriving in Toronto, he was still breathing and that got him past his medical, and keeping his record intact he went out at 1.13 of the initial round against Ron Rouselle, Toronto. Main event... Chuck Findlay..., going against Mark Ecimovich...Ecimovich was...promoted as the Australian heavyweight champion. Had the OAC and the press made any effort to check this "phony", they would have discovered that Tony Mundine is the

---

<sup>285</sup>Ibid. , September, 1987.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid. , November, 1982.

Australian heavyweight champion, has been since 1972. Allowing Ecimovich to be promoted as the Australian heavyweight champion was an out and out fraud and permitting Wilder to appear in the semi-final bout makes it very obvious that the members of the Ontario Athletic Commission are not doing the job that they collect salaries for from the Ontario taxpayers. These ludicrous shows, licensed and sanctioned by the Ontario Athletic Commission, only make a mockery of boxing. For \$15, \$20 and \$25 a ticket, it is the fans that take a bad beating<sup>287</sup>.

There were questionable proposed cards from which the Commission withheld its sanction owing to concerns about the interests of the public<sup>288</sup>, but the body apparently too often sanctioned dubious "pseudo-boxing" promotions that, in The Ring's eyes, should never have been staged in Toronto. One such event was dismissed as a "degrading fast buck con job", the writer lobbying for such farcical charades to be halted before a serious injury occurred<sup>289</sup>.

If the Ring's opinion of the poor quality and fraudulent nature of local promotions did not make for bad enough publicity, it was equally disdainful toward the unreasonably steep ticket prices charged by promoters, suggesting that such individuals were gouging Toronto boxing fans considering their product's shabby quality<sup>290</sup>.

---

<sup>287</sup>Ibid. , November, 1979.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid. , May, 1980.

<sup>289</sup>Ibid. , May, 1982.

<sup>290</sup>Ibid. , April, 1978; November, 1979, May, 1980, February & March, 1981; July, 1985 and September, 1986.

What is common about the reporting of both The Ring and The Globe and Mail from the 1960's onward is their growing perception of professional boxing in Toronto as a suspicious, fraudulent, almost "mickey mouse" operation, a sport characterized by deceit and one in which fans were unlikely to get their money's worth. The sport was giving off an increasingly bad odour in Toronto, and neither of the above sources were willing to inform their readers otherwise. One must consider the possibility that the professional game's deteriorating reputation may have eventually impacted on the appeal of amateur boxing. After the latter sport's heyday from the mid-1940's into the 1950's, even it started to fade from the Toronto sport scene. By the mid-1950's, the Palace Pier was the only venue still staging amateur cards and several institutions had abandoned teaching the sport<sup>291</sup>. Regular cards were still being held into the mid-1960's<sup>292</sup>, but that decade saw the federal government sever its funding for the sport, owing to its immoral public image<sup>293</sup> and the

---

<sup>291</sup>The Globe and Mail reports on 12 amateur cards unfolding at the Palace Pier in the first three months of 1956 on January 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, February 7, 21, & 28, March 6, 13, 20, & 27. The Canadian Armed Forces and Y.M.C.A. both dropped boxing in the mid-1950's according to Donnelly (1988), p. 76.

<sup>292</sup>The Globe and Mail, December 31, 1965. An article summing up the past year's boxing activity stated there had been 23 amateur cards in 1965 drawing a total of 7,000 spectators, an miniscule average (304) compared to the crowds of the late 1940's and early 1950's at the Gardens.

<sup>293</sup>Howell & Howell, p. 335. Although the federal government renewed its support for amateur boxing the following year, its perspective clearly indicated that the amateur sport's image had

Annual Newsboy Tournament was discontinued<sup>294</sup>. In 1973, both amateur and professional matches were being staged in Toronto in an effort to revive interest in both<sup>295</sup>.

The depth and degree of cynicism surrounding boxing, not surprisingly, did little to make Torontonians want to patronize the sport. A new generation of boxing fans could hardly be created when it was common knowledge that local promoters were passing off substandard entertainment to the public. The sport's smaller, hard-core, loyal audience was now all that remained in the stands, and this did not include mainstream middle-class Toronto<sup>296</sup>. Little credibility was

---

suffered as a result of the prevailing suspicion toward the professional game. The following statements made in the conclusions of a federal investigation into the safety of amateur boxing suggest the perceived linkage of the two was harmful to the amateur game. "There is a great need to strengthen the grassroots and national organization in order that the professional influence can be completely eradicated from amateur boxing...Unless amateur boxing is tightly controlled and completely disassociated from professional boxing, its brutal nature will appear from time to time to the detriment of the sport." See Orban, W. A. R. (1968). The Report of the Results of the Investigation of Amateur Boxing in Canada. pp. 61-2.

<sup>294</sup>After a crowd of only 1,981 in 1961, there was no further reference to the show in The Globe and Mail in subsequent years.

<sup>295</sup>The Ring, September 17, 1973.

<sup>296</sup>It has been contended by Brunt, pp. 184-5, that the hard-core boxing audience is essentially blue-collar. This societal group, however, has never been large enough to make the sport profitable for boxers and promoters. For that to happen, the sport has to be attractively cleansed, packaged and promoted so that it will be appealing to the societal group with the money to make it thrive, namely the North American middle class. It is the middle class audience with the most disposable income to spend on lucrative entertainment events, and buys the products sold by the sponsors of such promotions. Brunt suggests that the stereotypical



associated with the sport; thus, promoters had a hard time selling even legitimately first-class boxing events. In 1946, Playfair Brown ambitiously presented a card featuring high-priced American boxers billed as superior to the local fighters Toronto was accustomed to seeing. For this, the most expensive card he had ever staged, Brown appealed for local support so that he could stage more cards with top-notch American talent but his supposedly elite card drew only 3,000 fans<sup>297</sup>. From Brown's point of view, Toronto's support of big-time boxing had been sampled and found lacking, thus he made no further attempts to sell such expensive promotions.

The frustration experienced by Toronto's promoters in being rebuffed by local apathy, even when they were making a concerted effort and investment to stage elite matches was witnessed most starkly in 1973. In that year, Clyde Gray had

---

middle-class sport fan would "want to wash after sitting through a local club fight" (the lowest level of boxing in which ticket prices are low enough for just about anyone to attend) and would not want to be associated with the average boxer, "a guy who eats with his hands and literally has to be locked up at night so you know where he is." Thus, a lot of promotional effort must be put into the selling of boxers and matches to reach this audience. By the mid-1970's, the Toronto middle class appears to have been missing at boxing cards for a long time. Christie Blatchford wrote in The Globe and Mail, June 4, 1974, that Irv Ungerman's local cards had taken on the trappings of social gathering for his friends, the same faces showing up one promotion after another. "There haven't been many conversions. There haven't been many sport fans turning to boxing for the first time. There aren't many new faces at the Gardens for a Little Irv night." Blatchford's observation was consistent with Brunt's contention that the sport thrived when it reached out beyond its small, regular audience.

<sup>297</sup>The Globe and Mail, March 30 & April 17, 1946.

established himself as one of the very best welterweights in the world. He appeared four times in the Gardens, including bouts in which he won the British Commonwealth title, successfully defended it, then challenged for the world crown. Although the attendances for these cards were better than the paltry crowds of the late 1960's, they still lost money. After one event, Irv Ungerman bitterly reflected he could not continue taking losses to promote boxing locally<sup>298</sup>. The world title fight, in which Gray fought impressively in defeat, drew only 8,285 fans, the Gardens half empty for a bout in which one of Toronto's own sons almost became a world champion. Again, Ungerman went deeply into the red<sup>299</sup>. Clyde Gray never received the fan support or made the money his talent commanded<sup>300</sup>.

The year 1973 also saw the emergence of another factor which should have brought about large crowds in a city that supported boxing. For the first time, the sport enjoyed the impetus of wealthy American interests promoting the sport. Top Rank Incorporated, a body headed by influential American promoter Bob Arum, planned a monthly series (the Muhammad Ali Presents Series) of 12 elite-calibre matches to be held at the

---

<sup>298</sup>Ibid. , February 13, 1973.

<sup>299</sup>Ibid. , April 13, 1985.

<sup>300</sup>Ibid. , June 4, 1974, cited a local promoter as suggesting that Grey, in spite of being one of the three best welterweights in the world, but was still incapable of drawing large crowds to the Coliseum. The Globe and Mail, May 20, 1977 quoted Gray as complaining he had never made big money fighting in Toronto.

Gardens. The series was lavishly publicized, the promoters confidently predicting they could reestablish Toronto as a major world boxing centre.

When the first bell rang for the start of the series, Muhammad Ali Presents, a new era dawned for Toronto boxing...Toronto in short order looms as not only the fights capital of North America but as one of the leading boxing centres of the world. With the combined talents of Bob Arum's Top Rank, Maple Leaf Gardens and All Canada Sports, possibly the most energetic and well planned development of Major Boxing shows ever conceived is on hand for Toronto...And before the summer breezes of 1974 start blowing across this area boxing will have taken hold like never before in Toronto's fistic history. The future holds a booming bonanza for loyal fight fans who have followed boxing through its recent trying times<sup>301</sup>.

Elbaum's confident predictions as to the fan support his group would receive for importing high-priced American talent were as unrealistic as Playfair Brown's 27 years earlier. The first card promoted by this American/Canadian joint venture was the Gray/Napoles world title fight which, as discussed above, did not even come close to filling the Gardens or turning a profit. The second promotion, a match between world ranked lightweights, Ken Buchanan of Scotland and Frankie Otero of Florida drew a crowd of only 3,000 fans<sup>302</sup>. The promoters saw the writing on the wall and pulled the plug on

---

<sup>301</sup>The above quote, cited from the promotional program printed for the series was made by Don Elbaum, the American matchmaker whose job it was to promote the attractions.

<sup>302</sup>The Globe and Mail, October 12, 1973.

their ambitious endeavour<sup>303</sup>. Even when Toronto fans had been tempted with monthly cards featuring some of the world's best boxers, their response was lukewarm at the very best. Even American promoters, with all their resources and influence, were beating a dead horse in trying to revive a sport whose image had been so tarnished in Toronto.

Another local boxer, Nicky Furlano experienced this same local ambivalence 11 years later when he stepped into the ring on June 22, 1984, to challenge the World Lightweight Champion, Aaron Pryor in Toronto's Varsity Stadium<sup>304</sup>. A dismal crowd of 4,000 spectators was on hand to watch Furlano acquit himself honourably, losing a 15-round decision. The promoter of this bout needed 14,000 fans just to break even!

Local promoters, then, were not entirely to blame for boxing's declining fortunes between 1940 and 1993, as the quality of their entertainment was not always bad<sup>305</sup>. Rather, they were trying to sell a product that had

---

<sup>303</sup>The Ring, February, 1974, informed the reader that, "The Muhammad Ali Presents Boxing" series, after laying a large sized 'egg' with the Buchanan-Otero promotion here abandoned their plans to run monthly shows.

<sup>304</sup>The Globe and Mail, May 22, 1985.

<sup>305</sup>Ibid., April 13, 1985, devoted a large article to the woes of Toronto boxing promoters in trying to sell the sport locally, difficulties that stretched back many years. One promoter lamented that Toronto, unlike Montreal, was simply not a boxing town. Another cited the arrival of major league baseball as an entertainment attraction that stole away boxing's audience. The consensus, however, was that it was not for lack of trying on their (the promoter's) part that the sport was dying, local fans would not respond well to anything they promoted.

increasingly been tarred with the brush of suspicion. Toronto fans were not inclined to trust most boxing promotions, even some that featured talented boxers and later turned out to be quite entertaining.

There remains, however, an anomaly to the conclusion that Toronto abandoned boxing between 1940 and 1993 because of a general distrust of the sport's nature. There was a form of boxing entertainment that drew large throngs of spectators comparable to the regular, mammoth crowds of the sport's golden age. This kind of boxing, however, had nothing to do with, and did nothing to revive the sport locally. This form of entertainment involved television, but not in the manner popularly thought to have adversely affected the sport in America.

The most common explanation of boxing's decline in American urban centres cites the introduction of home television as the prime culprit. City boxing clubs were the feeder system for American boxing, the sport's grassroots foundation where most successful pugilists had their start. Many urban boxing clubs disappeared in the 1950's<sup>306</sup>, at the same time television arrived in the American home. There is ample reference in the literature linking the advent of televised boxing shows to the financial woes of such clubs, as well as inferences to the relationship between the medium and

---

<sup>306</sup>Einstein, C. (1956, August). T.V. Slugs the Boxers. Harper's Magazine. p. 65.

the sport being an unhealthy one<sup>307</sup>. By the early 1950's, televised boxing was massively popular with Americans. Broadcast by all three networks, and sponsored by corporations like Gillette and Pabst, it enjoyed unparalleled viewer ratings<sup>308</sup>, and was available every night of the week<sup>309</sup>. As millions of Americans were watching boxing at home, there was a rapid decline in the number of active boxers. A survey by The Ring estimated the boxing ranks had been cut in half by 1956<sup>310</sup>, as a result of boxers having fewer places to train. This development's negative affect on boxing was compounded by the fact that the sport's affair with television ended shortly thereafter. By the early 1960's, all three American networks had eliminated or drastically reduced their telecasts in the face of declining interest, the medium having diversified and found a wealth of more attractive programming. By 1959, television no longer needed boxing to attract an audience<sup>311</sup>,

---

<sup>307</sup>The following two sources state that boxing clubs went out of business because they could not compete with the weekly boxing shows in 1950's America. See: Smith, G. J. & Blackman, C. (1979). Sport in the Mass Media. Vanier City (Ontario): CAHPER, p. 46, and Riger, R. (1960). The Pros: A Documentary of Professional Football in America. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 25. Sammons, p. 130, refers to television having an ultimately parasitic effect on boxing.

<sup>308</sup>Ibid. , p. 149.

<sup>309</sup>Daley, A. New York Times. January 31, 1954.

<sup>310</sup>Einstein, p. 65.

<sup>311</sup>Sammons, p. 174.

and the novelty of the sport had worn off<sup>312</sup>. Both boxing participants and fans felt betrayed by the sport's whirlwind flirtation with the picture box. In their eyes, it had destroyed the sport's farm system. Few boxing fans were likely to head downtown to a boxing arena and pay to see mostly average local boxers when they could stay home and watch elite boxers on television for free.

When there was no T.V., you had to go and see fights. But who was going to go down and see an average fighter when you could watch Bob Satterfield on television for nothing? Even if you paid \$5 to get in, \$5 was a lot of money back then. That's all the promoters counted on-people coming in and buying tickets. When they put the Friday Night fights on television, it all went downhill<sup>313</sup>.

Elite boxing was being given away for free. With their revenue gone, many clubs went out of business, leaving many boxers without the opportunity to learn their craft or compete regularly. The only training ground left for many novice boxers was the few remaining clubs being used as television studios to broadcast local bouts<sup>314</sup>. Successful boxers at this level were approached by promoters and signed for network T.V. bouts, before they were competent enough to fight at that level<sup>315</sup>. Many such fighters, who never learned the

---

<sup>312</sup>Rubin, R. (April, 1986). Boxing and Television: The Second Honeymoon. Inside Sports, 8, pp. 16-18.

<sup>313</sup>Cassidy, R. (March, 1994). The Ring Magazine, pp. 26-7 & 60-1, and Daley, p. 19.

<sup>314</sup>Einstein, p. 65.

<sup>315</sup>Daley, p. 22 & Einstein, p. 68.

intricacies of boxing in a club, were badly beaten the first time they encountered elite opposition. One defeat for such boxers, who had been fast-tracked with overhyped "T.V. reputations" by the networks, condemned them to oblivion. Such boxers were often discarded in favour of other rising "stars", who (still being undefeated) were more attractive to sponsors. Television, then, crippled America's supply of talented boxers at the same time it consumed more and more of them.

Everything in fisticuffing is geared to bigness until boxing has become a garish, monstrous facade without soundness or foundation... Television is mainly responsible for boxing's steady disintegration, even though TV paradoxically creates more fans and swallows up more boxers at the same time<sup>316</sup>.

Such was the case with American boxing, but what of Toronto? It had dozens of clubs in the 1920's and 1930's offering local pugilists regular income<sup>317</sup>. Did they go out of business because fans were content to watch boxing on television? While there can be no doubt the sport was in decline by the 1950's, it was not a result of home television. Americans had been watching network broadcasts since 1946<sup>318</sup>. Torontonians, however, did not even have television until

---

<sup>316</sup>Daley, A. New York Times. February 2, 1955.

<sup>317</sup>Batten, p. 78.

<sup>318</sup>It was N.B.C. that first televised weekly boxing to Americans in 1946, with A.B.C. and C.B.S. following suit by 1949. See: Lunsford, J. N. (1992). Sport in the Land of Television: The Use of Sport in Network Prime-Time Schedules, 1946-50. Journal of Sport History. 19,(1), p. 60.



September, 1952, when they were the first Canadians ever to watch English language programming. By the end of that year, there were only 146,000 homes with television sets in the entire country<sup>319</sup>. That number would grow to 1.4 million by 1955 and 2.75 million by 1957<sup>320</sup>. The yearly number of Toronto cards had declined from 29 in 1938 to 8 in 1949. Furthermore, the attendances at local shows had fallen more than 75% from 159,407 in 1937-8 to 38,200 in 1949. Much of boxing's loss of popularity in Toronto was a *fait accompli* even before television had any presence in Canada.

Home television, then, was not the factor that undermined Toronto boxing. Another form of televised boxing, however, did play a role in the declining place of the sport in the Queen City from the 1960's onward. This form of boxing promotion would come to provide the one and only kind of boxing Torontonians needed and wanted to patronize.

Beginning in the late 1950's, a new form of boxing promotion arrived in North America which came to monopolize the sport worldwide. This promotion was far more lucrative than the weekly network broadcasts of the 1950's. Closed circuit television broadcasts, in which important bouts were beamed across the continent to large theatres, stadiums, and

---

<sup>319</sup>Troyer, W. (1980). The Sound of the Fury: An Anecdotal History of Canadian Broadcasting. Toronto: Wiley and Sons, p. 114.

<sup>320</sup>Weir, E.A. (1965). Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, pp. 260-1.

convention halls, could be watched by fans who paid considerably higher ticket prices than normal for local cards. Such telecasts became an increasingly popular means for promoters to make many times the revenue they could make from live gate receipts alone. These fights were typically World Heavyweight title bouts involving American boxers fighting in American venues. America still controlled the one division that increasingly monopolized the boxing market, the heavyweight division<sup>321</sup>. It was World Heavyweight Championship bouts, particularly during Muhammad Ali's career, that were most often broadcast on closed circuit television across North America, and seen in Toronto specifically. Torontonians responded enthusiastically to these promotions since elite bouts involving fighters in the biggest weight divisions had become their preference as early as the 1950's<sup>322</sup>. Such matches were still occasionally being presented on live cards by local promoters in the 1960's, with most of them heavyweight bouts involving local fighter George

---

<sup>321</sup>Hauser, p. 77, states that whoever controls the heavyweight title controls a sizable chunk of boxing. Brunt, p. 135 informs the reader that "Although the division is often one of boxing's weakest, heavyweights continue to have the greatest marquee value and command top dollar."

<sup>322</sup>Two of the largest professional boxing crowds in Toronto history took place in the mid-1950's. The Globe and Mail, January 27, 1954, cited a crowd of 14,731 at Maple Leaf Gardens to see local fighter Earl Walls, one of the top heavyweight boxers in the world, battle American Tommy Harrison. Two years later, the above newspaper informed on July 26, 1956 that 19,832 fans witnessed an outdoor World Light-Heavyweight Championship match between hometown boxer James Parker and American legend Archie Moore in Maple Leaf Stadium.

Chuvalo, and three of them being world title fights<sup>323</sup>. After the 1960's, however, when Chuvalo's career entered its downside and no new local heavyweight of comparable skill emerged to take his place, it was closed circuit presentations of American heavyweight title bouts that neatly filled this void to the satisfaction of Toronto fans. Such broadcasts, although certainly not the cause of the sport's decline, undermined any chance of a resurgence in live local promotions, for they increasingly monopolized an already shrinking market. What little boxing Toronto wanted to see could be readily provided by its neighbour to the south. No fewer than 30 such telecasts were promoted in Toronto between 1959 and 1980 alone. The average crowd at such events (8,471) was far superior to the average attendance at live cards throughout this era<sup>324</sup>. The people of Toronto were now only

---

<sup>323</sup>In 1961, a World Heavyweight Championship match was held in Toronto for the first time, between Americans Floyd Patterson and Tom McNeely, a bout that drew a fairly disappointing throng of 7,813 fans. In 1965 and 1966, Chuvalo challenged for the World Heavyweight title twice in Maple Leaf Gardens (See: The Globe and Mail, November 2, 1965 & March 30, 1966) losing decisions to Ernie Terrell and Muhammad Ali in front of 12,500 and 13,918 spectators respectively. Chuvalo drew two more large crowds to the Gardens in 1968 (See: The Globe and Mail, September 18 & November 13), drawing crowds of 7,500 and 12,756 for bouts against foreign opposition. Along with the crowd of 8,285 that attended Clyde Gray's world title challenge in 1973, the above crowds of more than 12,000 represented the end of an era in which promoters could make a profit from exclusively live events in Toronto.

<sup>324</sup>The closed circuit telecasts took place on the following dates in front of the following crowds: June 26, 1959, (6,000); March 14, 1961, (4,000); September 26, 1962 (8,600); July 23, 1963 (2,700); February 26, 1964 (4,000); February 2, 1965 (12,943); May 25, 1965 (3,200); November 23, 1965 (3,500); November 15, 1966

supporting professional boxing as a rare spectacle, rather than as a regular form of local sport entertainment.

To illustrate just how well received these American closed circuit broadcasts were with Toronto fans, one must consider that in 1965, a larger crowd paid to watch Chuvalo battle Floyd Patterson in New York's Madison Square Garden on a closed circuit screen in Maple Leaf Gardens, than the crowd in attendance to see Chuvalo fight live in Maple Gardens for the World Heavyweight Championship eight months later<sup>325</sup>! The Ring's Toronto writer, Frank Allnutt, cited the rapid growth and appeal of closed circuit promotions as a contributing factor to the slow death of live cards in Toronto. Allnutt's rationale was that little support for live, local cards resulted when fans had the option of saving their money for lucrative, championship bouts on the movie screen<sup>326</sup>. This position was supported by the fact that by

---

(4,500); February 7, 1967 (9,500); March 5, 1968 (11,600); February 17, 1970 (7,034); August 5, 1970 (NA); October 27, 1970 (11,000); December 8, 1970 (7,000); March 9, 1971 (12,500); May 11, 1971 (6,000); November 22, 1972 (4,000); January 23, 1973 (12,000); September 11, 1973 (9,107); January 29, 1974 (15,000); March 27, 1974 (5,000); June 18, 1974 (7,000); October 30, 1974 (14,500); October 1, 1975 (19,000); June 16, 1976 (3,500); September 29, 1976 (14,500); June 21, 1980 (13,000); October 3, 1980 (NA); November 26, 1980 (17,000). Crowd and gate figures cited from The Globe and Mail except the following, which were cited from the Toronto Star: June 26, 1959; May 11, 1971; November 22, 1972; January 23, 1973; September 11, 1973; June 21, 1980.

<sup>325</sup>The February 2, 1965 crowd for the closed circuit broadcast of the Chuvalo/Patterson bout in New York, cited above, was 12,943. The crowd for the live bout between Chuvalo and Terrell later that year, cited earlier, drew only 12,500 spectators.

<sup>326</sup>The Ring, February, 1975.

the late 1960's, local boxers seeking exposure and competition were tending to fight in conjunction with closed circuit telecasts of important American bouts<sup>327</sup>. This was the best, perhaps the only way they could be guaranteed of competing in front of large crowds. Thus, the sport of live Toronto boxing was now forced to "hitch a ride" on the back of bigger, better, American boxing. Although relatively rare occurrences, Toronto boxing fans appeared more than willing to withhold their money for boxing entertainment until such closed circuit promotions came along. The contradiction is that the American championship fights they were watching on the movie screen were as much part and parcel of the same unregulated, often dishonest sport as the local cards the city was increasingly ignoring.

From 1940 to 1993, professional boxing steadily disappeared from the Toronto sport scene. The sport's image was much more of an issue after the Second World War, and it was not a good one. Boxing was perceived (mostly accurately) throughout North America, as being dishonest, greedy, and deceptive, the kind of commercially unregulated activity that the public could not trust. In Toronto, the experience of local boxers and quality of local promotions was often

---

<sup>327</sup>No fewer than six Toronto promotions were cited in the late 1960's and early 1970's in which local boxers competed live on the preliminary undercard of shows in which important American bouts were being broadcast on the big screen. See: The Ring, February and September, 1969; May, 1970; February, 1971; April, 1973 and October, 1974.

consistent with this dubious reputation. The local media did nothing to deny this image, consistently casting the sport and its promoters in a suspicious light. Many thousands of Toronto fans clearly shared this perspective, as indicated by the miniscule volume of fans patronizing cards by the 1970's and 1980's. Even when promoters presented world class boxing live to the city, they found they were selling "damaged goods", a sport that local sport fans were reluctant to trust. The fact that Torontonians reserved their passionate support (after the 1960's) for relatively rare closed circuit telecasts of world title bouts promoted and staged in the United States, however, illustrates that local fans had become less interested in actively supporting the sport locally than having it provided for them by their American cousins. They were perfectly content to passively enjoy whatever boxing entertainment American boxing interests chose to provide. Whatever disdain Toronto's media and sport fans felt toward the suspicious nature of boxing did not stop local fans from paying to watch the best boxing in the world, emanating from south of the border. Toronto had no difficulty setting aside their ambivalence toward boxing when an important, big-money American fight could be seen on closed circuit. It was local boxing and boxers that bore the brunt of Toronto's moral disdain toward the sport.

#### Chapter 4

#### CONCLUSIONS

The first goal of this investigation was to ascertain when professional boxing's popularity began to decline in Toronto. It was determined that the sport's first and greatest decline coincided with Canada's participation in the Second World War. In 1938, the number of cards being staged in Toronto and the volume of fans paying to witness them had never been greater. By the last year of the war, 1945, the sport had almost completely disappeared from the Toronto scene. The following decade saw the sport rebound somewhat, but it would never again reach the appeal and presence it had enjoyed before the Second World War. What appeal boxing did have after World War Two was that of an occasional entertainment spectacle, rather than a sport which Torontonians wanted to support regularly for its own sake.

As with all historical inquiries, the researcher held unconscious assumptions coming into this investigation. This study was shaped by an assumption that professional boxing being very popular in Toronto was the *natural order of things*, the *normal state of affairs*, the *status quo*. Such an assumption led the researcher to look for developments which undermined the popularity of a sport which *should* still be popular. It was not realized until the research process was well underway that the state of professional boxing as a

prestigious, thriving sport in Toronto was the exception rather than the rule. Toronto's love affair with boxing was a relatively brief flirtation, involving some unrealistic rationalizations on the part of those Toronto interests (its British political establishment and media) powerful enough to shape the meaning of sport in the 1920's and 1930's.

In an age (the 1920's) when big-money sporting events were rapidly growing in popularity across North America (first in the United States, then emulated in Canada) professional boxing was especially commercial in nature. Boxing was more blatantly about the pursuit of money than virtually any other professional sport in the United States, boxing's undisputed home, and this became the reality of the sport in Toronto as well. After the First World War, the identity of boxers calling Toronto home clearly illustrates the underlying motivation of the sport. Toronto's boxers were drawn largely from ethnic minorities, men hailing from impoverished backgrounds with limited career opportunities. Their motivation to fight was clearly to make money. The tendency of Toronto fans to flock to boxing events in the greatest numbers at times (the late 1920's and late 1930's) when the very best boxers available were competing similarly illustrated that the sport was interwoven with money. The best boxers in the world commanded the largest purses and attracted the most spectators, generating the greatest profits for promoters.



Such a state of affairs was not well received by those British Torontonians who still clung to an amateur vision of sport in the face of changing times. Strongly represented in Ontario's political establishment, Canada's most powerful sport governing body, and the Toronto media, such individuals could not deny or prevent the commercial direction Canadian sport was taking after the First World War. They wanted sport to be about the preservation of British ideals; sport as a builder of character, of a better society, of more patriotic British subjects. In short, those of a more traditional British mindset wanted commercial profit to be kept out of "good sport". Such individuals were no more successful in stemming the increasing popularity of professional boxing in Toronto than they were in preventing the rise in popularity of other professional sports between the wars. What they did do in the case of boxing, was attempt to preserve their vision of sport by reinterpreting this sport as a good, pure, morally upright pursuit, one that contributed to their idea of a better society. Professional cards were used to raise money for worthy charities like the support of convalescing war veterans and Ontario amateur sport. The true nature of professional boxing, however, could be neither suppressed nor changed. The sport has always been (even between the wars) characterized by poor regulation and large amounts of money, a combination that has made boxing perennially vulnerable to the same traits (rampant corruption, greed and exploitation)

that advocates of British amateurism found so repugnant in commercial sport. By the 1940's, the romanticized view of boxing held by British Torontonians had given way to a new realism, an acknowledgement of what the sport really was, and not what they wanted it to be. After the Second World War, there was a huge decline in the number of Torontonians willing to patronize professional cards, compelling testimony to the city's changed perception of boxing. This deterioration of support was a confirmation of what had always been true. Toronto was not receptive to the reality of professional boxing. Sport fans in this city were predisposed to put aside their philosophical misgivings and support boxing only when the quality was very high calibre; when they were being presented prestigious, exciting, elite bouts. Otherwise, their loyalty and patronage drifted toward amateur boxing, which was much more consistent with their British values. By the 1960's, the important, elite boxing that Toronto fans were predisposed to watch could be amply provided by the occasional closed circuit broadcast of American fights. This patronage of exclusively American boxing indicated that Torontonians had remained interested in boxing as a commercial American spectacle long after they had withdrawn their regular support of the sport locally.

The perception of the sport by Toronto's political establishment, social elite and media changed after 1939, not boxing itself. The city's majority ethnic group saw only what

it wanted to see in boxing after World War One. After World War Two, a new realism had set in, one in which boxing was recognized for what it really was, a sport inconsistent with the amateur ideals of a very British city.

## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### Books

Bagnato, V. (1984). Half-a-Buck, Nobody and Me. Erin (Ontario): Boston Mills.

Luftspring, S. & Swarbrick, B. (1975). Call Me Sammy. Scarborough: Prentice Hall.

#### Magazine and Journal Articles

The Ring Magazine (Monthly issues, 1922-60, 1961-90)

Gladman, J. (October, 1973). Canadian Pro-Am Boxing Magazine.

#### Newspapers

The Globe and Mail Complete years: 1921, 1929, 1937, 1938, 1941, 1945, 1946, 1949, 1953, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1985, 1993.

Toronto Star, October 19, 1921, February 7, 1933, February 15, July 25 & December 4, 1985, March 19, 1993.

### Secondary Sources

#### Books

Adelman, M. (1986). A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70. Urbana: University of Illinois.

Batten, J. (1971). Champions: Great Figures in Canadian Sport. Toronto: New Press, pp. 72-84.

Bernard, G. C. (1952). The Morality of Prizefighting. Washington: Catholic University.

Berton, P. (1990). The Great Depression: 1929-39. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Berton, P. & Bliss, M. (1978). The Crazy Twenties. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Brunet, J. R. (1974). The Urban Community and Changing Moral Standards. In Horn, M. & Sabourin, R., Studies in

- Canadian Social History. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, pp. 298-325.
- Brunt, S. (1987). Mean Business: The Creation of Shawn O'Sullivan. Markham: Penguin.
- Chandler, J. M. (1988). Television and National Sport. Urbana: University of Illinois.
- Christie, J. (1990). Flesh and Blood: A Journey Into the Heart of Boxing. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Coleman, C. L. (1969). The Trail of the Stanley Cup: 1927-46. Place of publication not cited: National Hockey League.
- Curry, G. (1968). One Hundred Years of Canadian Football. Toronto: Pagurian.
- Dancocks, D. (1987). Spearhead to Victory: Canada and the Great War. Edmonton: Hurtig.
- D'Itri, P. W. (1982). Damon Runyon. Boston: Twayne.
- Donnelly, P. (1993). Subcultures and Sport: Resilience and Transformation. In Ingham, A. G. & Loy, J. Sport in Social Development. Champaign: Human Kinetics, pp. 119-46.
- Gallico, P. (1945). Farewell to Sport. Freeport: Books for Libraries Press.
- Glazebrook, G. P. de T. (1971). The Story of Toronto. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Goheen, P. (1970). Victorian Toronto: 1850-1900: Pattern and Process of Growth. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Goldman, H. G. (1984). 1984 Ring Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia. New York: The Ring.
- Gorn, E. (1986). The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prizefighting in America. London: Cornell.
- Granatstein, J. L. & Morton, D. (1989). A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War, 1939-45. Toronto: Denny's.
- Grombach, J. V. (1977). The Saga of the Fist. New Jersey: A. S. Barnes.

- Harney, R. F. & Troper, H. (1975). Toronto. Van Nostrand & Reinhold.
- Hauser, T. (1986). The Black Lights: Inside the World of Professional Boxing. Toronto: McGraw Hill.
- Howell, N. & Howell, M. L. (1969). Sport and Games in Canadian Life: 1700 to the Present. Toronto: MacMillan.
- Kilbourn, W. (1984). Toronto Remembered. Don Mills: Stoddart.
- Lewis, R. (1968). A History of Electoral Districts, Legislatures and Ministries of the Province of Ontario, 1867-1968. Toronto: Fogg (Queens Printer).
- MacInnes, G. (1935). Finding a Father. In Kilbourn, W. (1976). The Toronto Book: An Anthology of Writings, Past and Present. Toronto: MacMillan.
- Makowski, W. (1987). The Polish People in Canada: A Visual History. Montreal: Tundra.
- McFarlane, B. (1967). Fifty Years of Hockey, 1917-67: An Intimate History of the National Hockey League. Toronto: Pagurian.
- McKenzie, F. A. (1918). Canada's Day of Glory. Toronto: Briggs.
- Metcalf, A. (1987). Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Play in Canada. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Morrow, D. (1989). A Concise History of Sport in Canada. Toronto: Oxford.
- Nicolson, M. W. Peasants in an Urban Society. In Harney, R. F. (1985). Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945. Toronto: Multicultural Society of Ontario. pp. 47-73.
- Obodias, S. (1981). Maple Leaf Gardens: Fifty Years of History. Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- O'Driscoll, R. & Reynolds, L. (1988). The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada. Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada.
- Powers, R. (1984). Supertube: The Rise of Television Sports. New York: Coward-McCann.
- The Revised Statutes of Ontario, (1927). Toronto: Ontario Press Limited.

- Riger, R. (1960). The Pros: A Documentary of Professional Football in America. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Roberts, R. (1979). Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University.
- Sammons, J. (1988). Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society. Urbana: University of Illinois.
- Saunders, C. R. (1990). Sweat and Soul. Dartmouth: Lancelot Press & The Black Cultural Centre.
- Sinclair, L. (1948). We All Hate Toronto. In A Play on Words and Other Radio Plays. Toronto.
- Simpson, W. Hockey. In Morrow, D. (1989). A Concise History of Sport in Canada. Toronto: Oxford.
- Speisman, S. (1979). The Jews of Toronto. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Sports Illustrated, (1992). 1992 Sports Almanac. Toronto: Little, Brown & Company.
- Sullivan, J. (1974). The Grey Cup Story. Toronto: Pagurian.
- West, B. (1967). Toronto. Toronto: Doubleday.
- Weir, E. A. (1965). Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada. McClelland & Stewart.
- Wignall, T. (1923). Story of Boxing. London: Hutchinson.
- Wise, S. & Fischer, D. (1974). Science and Strength. Canada's Sporting Heroes. Don Mills: General Publishing. pp. 127-53.
- Wood, H. F. (1967). Vimy. Toronto: MacMillan.
- Zucchi, J. E. (1988). Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity. Kingston: Queens University.

#### Magazine and Journal Articles

- Anderson, A. (1969). An Interview with Hugh Garner. The Tamarack Review. 52, pp. 19-34.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and Social Class. Social Science Information, 17 (6), pp. 819-40.
- Cassidy, R. (March, 1994). The Ring Magazine.

- Donnelly, P. (1988). Sport as a Site for Popular Resistance. In R. Gruneau, Popular Cultures and Political Practises. Toronto: Garamond, pp. 69-82.
- Duncan, K. (1965). Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West. Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology. 2, pp. 19-40.
- Einstein, C. (1956, August). T.V. Slugs the Boxers. Harper's Magazine. pp. 65-68.
- Fairfax, J. (October, 1940). Canada's Colonial Complex: Sports. The Canadian Forum. pp. 117-8.
- Gladman, J. (October, 1973). Canadian Pro-Am Boxing Magazine.
- Foster, T. (1918, May). Why Our Soldiers Learn to Box. Outing, pp. 114-16.
- Gray, J. They're Fighting to Save What's Left of Sunday. In Macleans Magazine. February 15, 1955. pp. 30-37.
- Lunford, J. N. (1992). Sport in the Land of Television: The Use of Sport in Network Prime-Time Schedules, 1946-50. Journal of Sport History. 19, (1), pp. 56-76.
- Roberts, L. (November, 1931). Americanizing Canadian Sport. The Canadian Magazine. pp. 8, 41.
- Rubin, R. (April, 1986). Boxing and Television: The Second Honeymoon. Inside Sports, 8, pp. 16-8.
- Smith, G. J. & Blackman, C. (1979). Sport in the Mass Media. Vanier City (Ontario): CAHPER.
- Tucker, G. (1930-31). The Famine of Immigration to Canada, 1847. American Historical Review. 36, pp. 533-49.
- Weinberg, S. K. & Arond, H. (1952). The Occupational Sub-Culture of the Boxer. American Journal of Sociology. 57(5), pp. 461-69.

#### Newspaper Articles

- Daley, A. (January 31, 1954). Is Boxing on the Ropes? New York Times. pp. 19, 22-3, 25.
- Daley, A. (February 2, 1955). Shearing off the Tentacles. New York Times. p. 34.



### Theses and Dissertations

- Cosentino, F. (1973). History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Lansley, K. L. (1971). The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Lappage, R. (1974). Selected Sports and Canadian Society. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Parrat, C. (1984). Sport and Hegemony: Windsor, 1895 to 1929. Windsor: University of Windsor.

### Proceedings

- Kidd, B. (1994). Capturing the State for Amateur Sport: The Ontario Athletic Commission, 1920-47. Proceedings of the 7th Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport, Calgary: University of Calgary. pp. 1-37.
- Kidd, B. (1974). Sport or Athletics: A North American Dilemma. Proceedings of the 15th Annual Canadian/American Seminar. Windsor: University of Windsor. pp. 134-41.
- Metcalfe, A. (1983). The Demise of Amateurism in Canada. Proceedings of the FISU Conference-Universiade 83 in Association with the 10th HISPA Conference, pp. 308-315.

### Government Documents

- Gosse Report (1981), The Federal Task Force on Boxing in Canada.
- Orban, W. A. R. (1968). The Report of the Results of the Investigation of Amateur Boxing in Canada.

APPENDIX ATORONTO BOXING CROWDS

(S): cited from the Toronto Star. (GM): cited from The Globe and Mail. (R): cited from The Ring.

1921

<u>CARD</u>		<u>VENUE</u>	<u>ATTENDANCE</u>
January	22	Armouries	NA
February	1	Armouries	5,000 (S)
Februry	22	Armouries	3,500 (S)
April	12	Armouries	6,000 (S)
May	10	Arena	NA
May	21	Arena	3,000 (GM)
May	28	Arena	4,500 (S)
July	1	Arena	NA
July	13	Arena	NA
August	17	Arena	NA
September	21	Arena	NA
October	19	Armouries	5,000 (GM)
November	8	Armouries	NA
November	23	Armouries	NA

1929

January	5	Coliseum	8,000 (GM)
January	26	Coliseum	NA
February	9	Coliseum	11,500 (GM)
February	19	Coliseum	NA
March	1	Stand.Theatre	NA
March	13	Coliseum	9,000 (S)
March	23	Coliseum	NA
April	9	Coliseum	4,000 (S)
April	16	Coliseum	8,000 (GM)
April	30	Coliseum	NA
May	14	Coliseum	NA
June	1	Coliseum	NA
June	25	Maple Leaf Stad.	8,700 (GM)
July	30	Coliseum	2,500 (GM)
August	20	Arena Gardens	5,000 (S)
August	27	Arena Gardens	NA
September	11	Coliseum	NA
September	18	Arena Gardens	NA
September	24	Arena Gardens	5,000 (S)

October	1	Arena Gardens	NA
October	8	Arena Gardens	NA
October	19	Arena Gardens	9,000 (S)
November	9	Coliseum	NA
November	23	Arena Gardens	2,000 (S)
December	3	Coliseum	NA
December	28	Coliseum	6,000 (GM)

1933 (first six months)

January	28	Mutual Arena	3,300
February	21	Mutual Arena	4.953
March	11	Mutual Arena	2,600
March	27	Mutual Arena	2,500
May	10	Mutual Arena	NA
May	27	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
June	20	Mutual Arena	1,200

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

1937

January	7	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,100 (S)
January	21	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000 (GM)
February	4	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,462 (GM)
February	18	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,872 (GM)
March	4	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,695 (GM)
April	3	Maple Leaf Gardens	8,524 (GM)
May	1	Mutual Arena	5,000 (GM)
May	18	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,500 (GM)
June	2	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,564 (S)
June	15	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,600 (S)
July	6	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,900 (GM)
July	27	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000 (GM)
August	12	Maple Leaf Stadium	7,000 (GM)
August	24	Maple Leaf Gardens	6,019 (GM)
September	9	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000 (S)
September	21	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,775 (S)
October	9	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
October	23	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,851 (S)
November	3	Mutual Arena	3,784 (GM)
November	16	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
November	24	Mutual Arena	5,420 (GM)
November	30	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
December	8	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
December	15	Mutual Arena	NA
December	22	Maple Leaf Gardens	6,500 (S)

1938

January	5	Mutual Arena	NA
January	18	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
January	25	Mutual Arena	NA
February	1	Maple Leaf Gardens	10,000
February	8	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
February	15	Mutual Arena	4,000
February	22	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
March	1	Maple Leaf Gardens	13,000
March	8	Mutual Arena	NA
March	15	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
March	22	Maple Leaf Gardens	7,000
March	29	Mutual Arena	6,000
April	12	Maple Leaf Gardens	11,200
April	19	Mutual Arena	4,000
April	26	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
June	14	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
June	28	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
July	19	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
August	2	Exhibition Grandst.	2,200
August	17	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
September	24	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
October	4	Mutual Arena	NA
November	2	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000
November	8	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
November	22	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA
December	13	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

#### 1941

January	28	Maple Leaf Gardens	6,600
February	19	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,200
February	26	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000
March	19	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,300
April	15	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,500
April	23	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,500
May	13	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,800
June	17	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,500
June	25	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,000
October	29	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,000
November	11	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000
November	25	Maple Leaf Gardens	NA

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

#### 1946

January	22	Maple Leaf Gardens	6,000
March	27	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000

April	17	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000
May	1	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,200
May	28	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000
June	8	Maple Leaf Gardens	1,200
September	6	Oakwood Stadium	3,000
September	17	Maple Leaf Gardens	7,000
October	21	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,000
November	25	Maple Leaf Gardens	7,500

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

#### 1949

March	2	Maple Leaf Gardens	7,000
May	10	Mutual Arena	1,000
July	27	Oakwood Stadium	4,200
September	20	Maple Leaf Gardens	10,000
October	25	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000
November	15	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000
December	6	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000
December	13	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

#### 1953

January	6	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,000
February	10	Maple Leaf Gardens	8,500
April	21	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000
April	28	Mutual Arena	3,700
June	9	Maple Leaf Gardens	6,000

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

#### 1957

January	15	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,400
March	5	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,500
March	26	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,500
April	23	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,500
September	10	Maple Leaf Gardens	8,000
December	10	Maple Leaf Gardens	2,000

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

#### 1961

March	14	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,000
March	28	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,000
June	28	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,400
October	3	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,000
December	5	Maple Leaf Gardens	7,813

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

1965

April	20	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,920
June	7	Maple Leaf Stadium	900
November	2	Maple Leaf Gardens	12,500

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

1969

May	26	Coliseum	1,500
April	22	North Toronto Arena	NA
November	4	Royal York	167

All cited from The Globe and Mail

1973

February	13	Maple Leaf Gardens	4,500
April	12	Maple Leaf Gardens	5,500
May	2	Beaches Boxing Club	NA
July	17	Beaches Boxing Club	NA
August	16	Coliseum	5,500
September	23	Maple Leaf Gardens	8,285
October	12	Maple Leaf Gardens	3,000

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

1977

January	19	Sully's Gym	NA
March	8	North York Arena	5,000
November	2	St. Lawrence Market	NA
December	9	Coliseum	1,500
December	14	St. Lawrence Market	500

All cited from The Globe and Mail.

1985

February	15	St.Lawrence Market	NA(S)
March	27	St.Lawrence Market	400(R)
April	30	Sully's Gym	NA(R)
June	1	George Bell Arena	300(GM)
July	24	Concert Hall	NA(S)
September	11	Concert Hall	NA(GM)
September	20	St.Lawrence Market	NA(GM)
December	4	St.Lawrence Market	NA(S)

1993

March	27	Sheraton Hotel	NA
-------	----	----------------	----

APPENDIX BTORONTO AND MONTREAL CROWD FIGURES, 1922-39

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TORONTO</u>	<u>MONTREAL</u>
1922 June	8500	
1924 Dec.	4500	2000
1925 Mar.		2500
Apr.	4000	
Nov.	4000	
1926 Jan.	3800	
	6000	
	7000	
		8000, 1800, 6000, 4800
1928 June		5000
Dec.		14000, 11000
1929 Apr.		8000
May	9000	
Aug.	10000	6000
Sept.		7000
1930 June	6000	
Aug.		5000
1931 Aug.	6000	7000, 10000
Sept.	6000	
Dec.		9000
1932 Sept.		7000
1933 June		3000
Sept.		1200
Nov.	7000	
Dec.		8000
1934 Oct.		7765
1935 Aug.	9000	
Oct.		11000
1936 May	14993	
July	6200	
Aug.		4550
1937 Nov.	10000 5000	
Dec.		7000
1938 Mar.	7000 7000	
Apr.	10100	
Aug.	4000	
Oct.		8000, 8000
Nov.	4500	
Dec.	10000	5000
-----		-----
177,593 fans		177,615 fans
24 cards		27 cards
Average crowd: 7,400		Average crowd: 6,578

Crowd figures cited from The Ring.



TORONTO AND MONTREAL CROWD FIGURES, 1940-93.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>TORONTO</u>	<u>MONTREAL</u>
1940 May	8,000	
October		9,000
November		5,000
1941 February	6,000	
1942 January	6,000	
April	5,000	
November		1,152
1945 January		10,000
October		2,200
1946 April	5,000	5,000
May		7,000
November		15,000
December	7,000	5,000
1947 April		9,000
June		8,500
September		2,000
December		5,000
1948 January		9,000
April	6,000	
October		7,000
1949 February		6,000
April		7,000
May		12,000
June		10,500
October		20,000
November		2,500
1950 February	5,000 6,000	12,000
March		5,912
May	7,000 5,000	6,380
June	4,000 6,000	12,000
July		11,593
September		3,000
November	4,000	
1951 January	3,000 10,000	
May	6,500	
June	10,000	
August	9,000	
September		11,000
November		10,000
December		5,238
1952 January	3,000	
April	7,093	
October		5,000
November		8,251
1953 May		5,698
July		7,000
October		2,000

1954	April	14,731	1,200
1955	September		2,000
1957	July		7,500
	1958 August		6,000
	1959 December	4,000	
1960	January		12,500
	October	3,500	10,000
	November		13,014
1962	August		500
1965	April		3,470
	July	5,980	
1966	January	12,500	
	June	13,918	
1967	June		2,100
	August		1,000
1969	November	6,000	
	December		5,166
1970	May	7,034	2,822
	June		12,500
	December		6,000
1971	February	11,000	10,000
	June		6,000
	November		4,000
	December		7,000
1972	February		7,000
	September		6,000
	December		7,251
1973	May	5,000	
	June		6,000
	July	5,500	
1974	February		1,228
	March	5,000	
	August	5,149	
	October	7,000	
	December	200	15,200
1975	August		3,500
	November	200	
1976	June		6,000
	July	2,000	
	December		1,500
1977	January	800	2,500
	March		6,779
	June	500	3,000
	November		6,000
1978	April	1,500 500	4,300
	May	230	
	July		5,000
1979	June		6,355
	September		5,000
	October		15,584
	November	600	
	December		5,662

1980	January		6,000
	February		8,000
	April		2,150
	May	500	6,120
	June		5,000
	December		4,323
1981	February	900	6,883
	March		6,916
	May		4,582
	August	800	
	December	800	
1982	January		6,000
	April	500	6,725
	June	300	5,037
	August		5,250
	September	300 3,500	4,713
	December	400	1,011 7,211
1983	January		7,300
	July	1,200	5,722 3,407
	August	3,000	
1984	March		20,700
	August		19,807
1985	January		7,211
	March		2,000
	May	500	
	July		4,200
	September		6,000
	October	800	
1986	January		3,800
	March	800	2,000
	May	800	4,757
	September	700 7,500	
1987	February	3,000	1,500
	March		2,780
	July	1,500 1,000	1,700
	September		3,600
1988	January	1,500	
	May	2,000	
1990	March		2,500
	August		4,200
1991	April		3,500
-----			-----
65 crowds			109 crowds
273,325 spectators			679,260 spectators
Average crowd: 4,205			Average crowd: 6,232

Crowd figures cited from The Ring.

APPENDIX CORIGIN OF BOXERS COMPETING IN TORONTO

#: signifies a Toronto boxer identified by The Globe and Mail who did not compete in his hometown in given year.

1921Toronto Boxers

1. Pee Wee Adams
2. Dick Atkins
3. Ernie Barrieau
4. Frank Barrieau
5. Al Bennett
6. Fern Bull
7. Frank Bull
8. Norman Cave
9. Percy Cave
10. George Cooney #
11. Fred Compton
12. Harry Freeman
13. Frank Fleming
14. George Foster #
15. Jack Goldberg
16. Benny Gould
17. Jack Jarvis
18. Soldier Jones
19. Teddy Joyce
20. Fred Lansdowne
21. Scott Lismer
22. Young McEwan
23. Packy McGrath
24. Tommy Morrish
25. Young Mosely
26. Chris Newton
27. Patsy O'Toole
28. Kid Rose
29. Frankie Russell
30. Sid Simmons
31. Dick Smith #
32. Frankie Stone
33. Harry Stone
34. Young Sunshine
35. Eddie Williams
36. Curley Wilshur

Foreign Boxers

1. Tom Dyer (Australia)

Canadian Boxers

1. Joe Atwood (Welland)
2. Joe Baker (Montreal)
3. Ernie Barrieau (Vanc.)
4. Edwin Bennett (Port Hope)
5. Frank Condon (Windsor)
6. Johnny Dobbs (Hamilton)
7. Mickey Delmont (Montreal)
8. Tommy Doyle (Hamilton)
9. Frankie Fleming (Montreal)
10. Eddie Gallagher (Hamilton)
11. (?) Garritty (Hamilton)
12. Young Hardy (Hamilton)
13. Young Peter Jackson (Wind.)
14. Irish Kennedy (Hamilton)
15. Phil Murray (Hamilton)
16. Dick O'Brien (Montreal)
17. Pat O'Brien (Hamilton)
18. Young Rose (Hamilton)
19. Kid Rose (Hamilton)
20. Bert Schneider (Montreal)
21. Pete Scott (Hamilton)
22. Tiger Smith (Hamilton)

American Boxers

1. Dick Atkins (Syracuse)
2. Phil Bloom (New York)
3. Joe Burman (Chicago)
4. Frank Burns (Lockport)
5. Harry Coulin (Buffalo)
6. Frank Daly (New York)
7. Fred Fulton (New York)
8. Jimmy Goodrich (Buffalo)
9. Harry Greb (Pittsburgh)
10. Joe Jawson (Milwaukee)
11. Al Johnson (Tulsa)
12. Johnny Kaufmann (Roch.)
13. Sam Langford (Boston)
14. Dick Loadman (Lockport)
15. Nick Michaelis (Syracuse)

2. Freddie Jacks (England)
3. Ted Lewis (England)
4. Kid Lyon (England)
5. Sailor Billy Smith

16. Roy Moore (St. Paul)
17. Soldier Bob Moore (Pawt.)
18. Eddie Moy (New York)
19. K. O. Mueller (Chicago)
20. Joe Phillips (Buffalo)
21. Bud Riley (Buffalo)
22. Red Smith (Buffalo)
23. Fred Thompson (Buffalo)
24. Carl Tremaine (Listowel)
25. Jack Walsh (New York)
26. Al Wise (Syracuse)

### 1929

#### Toronto Boxers

1. Bill Ayrton
2. George Barber
3. Albert Belanger
4. Tommy Bland
5. Bobby Booth
6. Tommy Bragan
7. Ernie Brooks
8. Bobby Eber
9. Frank Edgerton
10. Willie Edgerton
11. George Fifield
12. Larry Gains
13. Harry Goldstein
14. Johnny Grant
15. Sam Hackett
16. Billy Humphries #
17. Jack Johnston
18. Eddie Judge
19. Doug Lewis
20. Artie McCann
21. Willie McDonald
22. Jock McGregor
23. Tommy Mitchell
24. George Nash
25. Chris Newton
26. Jackie Phillips
27. Earl Pickering
28. Steve Rocco
29. Harry Sacks
30. Al Sandford #
31. Ernie Taylor
32. Phil Waters #
33. Spinny Weinraub

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Scotty Adair (Oshawa)
2. Charlier Belanger (Winn).

#### American Boxers

1. Dandy Allen (Pittsburgh)
2. Heavy Andrews (Erie)
3. Bert Artt (Newark)
4. Happy Atherton (Indian)
5. Lou Atta (Rochester)
6. Joe Barton (Buffalo)
7. Ruby Bradley (Chicago)
8. Joe Brown (Buffalo)
9. Shifty Calloway (Indi.)
10. Luis Carpentero (Tole.)
11. Frank Carroll (Roch.)
12. Bobby Clary (Rochester)
13. Joe Coffmann (Memphis)
14. Dick Coogan (Syracuse)
15. Willie Cubic (New York)
16. Willie Davies (Charl.)
17. Freddie Dawson (Syr.)
18. Jimmy Dawson (Jamest.)
19. Jack Delaney (Syracuse)
20. Larry De Marco (Roch.)
21. Jack Dempsey (Tacoma)
22. Young Dempster (Roch.)
23. Earl Duquette (Boston)
24. Chuck Feldman (Chicago)
25. Chuck Freesman (Erie)
26. Joe Gans (Pennsylvania)
27. Marty Gold (Phil.)
28. Har. Goldstein (Bos.)
29. Frisco Grande (Buff.)
30. Alex Hart (Phil.)
31. Emmanuel Higgins (Buff.)
32. Al Jennings (Buffalo)
33. Tony Johnston (Syr.)
34. Willie La Morte (Buff.)
35. Mickey Lee (Buffalo)
36. Jack Lewis (Buffalo)

3. Joe Brown (Montreal)
4. Clovis Durand (Montreal)
5. Gene Favall (Winnipeg)
6. Art Giroux (Montreal)
7. Ronnie Headley (Ottawa)
8. Harry Hill (Montreal)
9. Hughie Lees (Winnipeg)
10. Tony McBeigh (Vancouver)
11. Johnny McCoy (Montreal)
12. Mickey McDonald (Ham.)

#### Foreign Boxers

1. Black Bill (Cuba)
2. George Cook (Australia)
3. Routier Parra (Chile)
4. Jimmy Campbell (Scotland)
5. Eugene Huat (France)
6. Johnny Beamus (Bermuda)
7. Ted Moore (England)
8. Verhamme Julien (Belgium)
9. Hughie Rochs (Scotland)
10. Jack Joseph (Wales)
11. Kid Chocolate (Cuba)
12. Doddy Oldfield (England)

37. Mike Marcelles (Roch.)
38. Billy Martin (Jamest.)
39. Johnny McCoy (Roch.)
40. Leo Mozdy (Erie)
41. M. O'Donnell (Buf.)
42. Mickey Paul (Buffalo)
43. Irving Peck (Syr.)
44. Johnny Pial (Penns.)
45. Johnny Rhuland (Buff.)
46. Joey Ross (New York)
47. Charlie Pinto (Buffalo)
48. Patsy Pollock (Chicago)
49. Jack Purvis (Indian.)
50. Tony Ross (Pittsburgh)
51. Sammy Rothstein (L.A.)
52. Spider Ryan (New York)
53. Johnny Sacco (Buffalo)
54. Frank Schwartz (Indi.)
55. Izzy Schwartz (New Y.)
56. Johnny Seamus (Indian.)
57. Dory Shimar (Syracuse)
58. Jimmy Slavin (New York)
59. Frank Smith (Buffalo)
60. Eddie Sweeney (Syr.)
61. Phil Tobias (New York)
62. Tony Tozzo (Buffalo)
63. Bobby Wallace (Roch.)
64. Ad Wolgast (Phil.)
65. Kid Woods (Indianapolis)
66. Marvin Woods (Indi.)
67. Art Wander (Buffalo)
68. Ernie Woodward (L.A.)

#### 1937

#### Toronto Boxers

1. Joey Abrams
2. Spider Armstrong
3. Joe Bagnato
4. George Bland
5. Tommy Bland
6. Morris Bowmile
7. Ray Cook
8. Bobby Docherty
9. Jack Docherty #
10. Mickey Donnelly #
11. Pat Flanagan #
12. Frank Genovese
13. Vince Glionna
14. Jimmy Gordon
15. Henry Hook

#### American Boxers

1. Charlie Belanger (Colu.)
2. Billy Beaven (Ann Arbor)
3. Joey Brown (Syracuse)
4. George Burnette (Detr.)
5. Jack Burke (Niag. Falls)
6. Bruce Campbell (Chicago)
7. Jimmy Clark (New York)
8. Ed Deluzio (Hollywood)
9. Eddy Dempsey (Syracuse)
10. Charley Douglas (Buff.)
11. Don Eddy (Buffalo)
12. Johnny Edwards (Chic.)
13. Bill Fogarty (Roch.)
14. Jimmy G? (Pitts.)
15. Ted Gallagher (Pontiac)

16. Bill Humphries
17. Norm Hurdman
18. Murray Ingles
19. Max Kadin
20. Ted Keating
21. Sammy Luftspring
22. Frank Martin #
23. Tommy McBeigh
24. Red Munroe
25. Chuck Murphy
26. Davey Paul
27. Irving Pease
28. Georgie Platt #
29. Ray Ranibow
30. Billy Sinclair
31. Red Winnick
32. Tiger Worth
33. Baby Yack
34. Dave Yack
35. Jimmy Young

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Henry Auger (Montreal)
2. Billy Barrow (Montreal)
3. Angelo Callura (Hamilton)
4. Jackie Callura (Hamilton)
5. George Carpenter (Halifax)
6. Eddie Carroll (Ottawa)
7. Jimmy Chapman (Vancouver)
8. Jack Dubois (Sherbrooke)
9. Gamelin Dumas (Montreal)
10. Orval Drouilliard (Wind.)
11. Billy Evans (Regina)
12. Mike Gravino (Hamilton)
13. Frankie Kamicki (Winnipeg)
14. Billy Lee (Vancouver)
15. Doug Marsh (Montreal)
16. Joe Marsh (Montreal)
17. Frank Martin (Montreal)
18. Bill McBeigh (Vancouver)
19. Wildcat Pettit (Sherbrooke)
20. Dummy Rowan (Montreal)
21. Hec Telino (Timmins)
22. Bill Townsend (Vancouver)
23. Young Stropp (Winnipeg)
24. Gordon Wallace (Vancouver)
25. Howard Wheeler (Oshawa)

16. Sammy Garcia (New York)
17. Benny Goldberg (Det.)
18. Rosey Grier (Akron)
19. Tiger Jackson (Akron)
20. Johnny Jadick (Phil.)
21. Frank Katzman (Buffalo)
22. Bill Lee (Reno)
23. Joe Lyons (Buffalo)
24. Carl Menza (Buffalo)
25. Mickey Misko (Detroit)
26. Kayo Morgan (Detroit)
27. Wild. O'Conner (Scr.)
28. Matt Ozanick (Pitts.)
29. George Pace (Cleveland)
30. Vern Patteson (Chicago)
31. Lloyd Pine (Akron)
32. S.S. Powell (Boston)
33. Leo Rittenour (Akron)
34. Barney Ruffner (Pitts.)
35. Geor. Salvadore (Hous.)
36. Tony Scilino (Buffalo)
37. Sammy Shivas (Hous.)
38. Sam Stewart (Cleveland)
39. Jack Sullivan (Peoria)
40. Joe Tambe (Buffalo)
41. Sammy Taormini (Akron)
42. Al Trainor (Rochester)
43. Tommy Waldon (Detroit)
44. Johnny Walker (Roch.)
45. Richie Wobser (Clev.)
46. Bobby Woods (Fall Riv.)
47. Chuck Woodsy (Detroit)

#### Foreign Boxers

1. Mog Mason (Wales)
2. Bobby Cortez (Mexico)
3. Routier Parra (Chile)

1941

Toronto Boxers

Foreign Boxers

1. Spider Armstrong
2. Joey Bagnato
3. Beverley Carter
4. Aaron Clairman
5. Steve Curley
6. Vern Escoe
7. Frank Genovese
8. Al Grace
9. Walter Hicks
10. Jackie Joad
11. Johnny Keeler
12. Scott Ramage
13. Simeon Waithe
14. Patsy Zocanno
15. Johnny Loftus

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Frenchy Beaudin (Montreal)
2. Maxie Berger (Montreal)
3. Nels Broadhead (Hamilton)
4. Dave Castilloux (Montreal)
5. Al Delaney (Windsor)
6. Johnny Greco (Montreal)
7. Harry Hurst (Montreal)
8. Sonny Jones (Vancouver)
9. Johnny Keeler (Highl Crk.)
10. Doug Marsh (Montreal)
11. Joe Marsh (Montreal)
12. Russ McCarthy (Hamilton)
13. Alex McCullough (Highl. Creek)
14. Katsumi Morioka (Vancouver)
15. Joe Parsy (Niagara Falls)
16. Eddie Petrin (Montreal)
17. Ken Robinson (Kingston)
18. Bill Sawtosky (Saskatchewan)
19. Lou Severs (Niagara Falls)
20. Len Wadsworth (Hamilton)

1. Manuel Villa (Mexico)
2. Joe De Jesus (P. Rico)

#### American Boxers

1. Sammy Angott (Louis.)
2. Harris Blake (Buffalo)
3. Art Foster (Buffalo)
4. Freddy Franchi (Mary.)
5. Johnny Hart (N. Falls)
6. Joey Kushner (Syracuse)
7. Willie Lacey (Rochester)
8. Tommy Mack (Syracuse)
9. Joe Matti (Syracuse)
10. W. B. Niland (Maine)
11. Wild Bill Nolan (Balt.)
12. Lenny Olzak (Buffalo)
13. George Pace (Cleveland)
14. Bob Pastor (New York)
15. Matt Perfetti (N. Y.)
16. Johnny Rinnidi (Brook.)
17. Lou Savero (Syracuse)
18. Les Servos (Buffalo)
19. Bill Speary (Nanticoke)
20. Tommy Spiegel (Penns.)
21. Victor Troisi (N.Y.)
22. George Twitty (N. Y.)
23. Don Verillia (New York)
24. Jimmy Winters (Buffalo)

### 1946

#### Toronto Boxers

1. Jack Armstrong
2. Joe Bagnato
3. Tommy Bland #
4. Solly Bonaparte
5. Frank Brancetti
6. Frank Cordino
7. Rudy Deflorio
8. Bobby Docherty
9. Mickey Eisen #
10. Joey Ferrier
11. Pat Giordano

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Andy Alexander (P.Colb.)
2. Maurice Auger (Mont.)
3. Jean Barriere (Mont.)
4. Nels Broadhead (Gue.)
5. Johnny Buford (Quebec)
6. Fernand Ceryan (Mont.)
7. Raymond Daoust (Mont.)
8. Pat Dupont (Ottawa)
9. George Gershwin (Mont.)
10. Kenny Haines (Hamilton)
11. T. Johnst. (N.Falls.)



12. Jackie Harding
13. Charley Kelley #
14. Arthur King
15. Terry Kipp
16. Jimmy Marson
17. Frankie Pucci
18. Scott Ramage
19. Teddy Swain
20. Art Theriault

#### American Boxers

1. Billy Bengal (Detroit)
2. Pete Bolos (Detroit)
3. Al Ellis (Detroit)
4. Billy Evans (Lackawanna)
5. Jean-Paul Frechette (Mass.)
6. Jimmy Hatcher (Florida)
7. Mickey Hogan (New York)
8. Willie Joyce (Indiana)
9. Juan Manuel (Ohio)
10. Harry Marshall (Detroit)
11. Kenny Mashino (Honolulu)
12. George Renault (Mass.)
13. Smokey Robinson (Buffalo)
14. Eddie Smith (Rochester)
15. Johnny Virgo (Rochester)
16. Al Young (Buffalo)

12. Lou Kansas (Prt. Colb.)
13. R. La Prairie (Mont.)
14. Pat Marsden (Mont.)
15. Joey McPhee (Oshawa)
16. Katsumi Morioka (Vanc.)
17. Jasper O'Henley (Mont.)
18. Gene Richards (Mont.)
19. Jimmy Rizzo (Hamilton)
20. Larry Sloan (Montreal)
21. Stan Stinson (Hamilton)
22. Benny Swartz (Mont.)
23. Rocky Wagner (Edmonton)
24. Ralph Walton (Montreal)
25. Danny Webb (Montreal)
26. Bill Zaduck (Guelph)

### 1949

#### Toronto Boxers

1. Oliver Breton
2. Solly Cantor #
3. Jack Duggan
4. Vern Escoe
5. Joey Ferrier
6. Bill Fifield
7. Johnny Graham #
8. Arthur King #
9. Ernie Majury
10. Jimmy Marson
11. Alan McFater
12. Shawn McGuinness
13. Dave Mitchell
14. Rudy Pasquale
15. Leo Pietras
16. Gus Rubicini
17. Wilf Sauve
18. Bill Struck
19. Simeon Waithe
20. Earl Walls

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Frankie Belanger (Que.)
2. March Begin (Montreal)
3. Joe Cardinal (Oshawa)
4. Amos Dorsey (St. Cath.)
5. Noel Gagnon (Quebec)
6. Johnny Greco (Montreal)
7. Jack Herman (Montreal)
8. Ken Lovegrove (Hamilton)
9. Joe Pyle (New Waterford)
10. Jean Richard (Montreal)
11. George Sinclair (Winn.)
12. Paul Thibeault (Mont.)
13. Bill Zaduck (Guelph)
14. Eddie Zastre (Winnipeg)

#### American Boxers

1. Jesse Bradshaw (Buffalo)
2. Jeff Clanton (Erie)
3. Vic Eisen (Buffalo)
4. Jim Hayden (Buffalo)
5. Tim Healey (Rochester)

- 21. Billy Zaduck
- 22. Pete Zaduck #

- 6. Calvin Leigh (Rochester)
- 7. Ted Lowry (New Bedford)
- 8. Juan Manuel (Cleveland)
- 9. Bill McCarthy (Mass.)
- 10. Vern Mitchell (Detroit)
- 11. Johnny Rowe (Roch.)
- 12. Bill Smiley (Buff.)
- 13. Larry Spunk (N. Y.)

### 1953

#### Toronto Boxers

- 1. Tommy Corrick
- 2. George Armstrong
- 3. Howard Leslie
- 4. Elmer Haskell
- 5. Steve Horvath
- 6. Billy Fifield
- 7. Johnny O'Sullivan
- 8. James Parker #
- 9. Johnny Tuck #
- 10. Davey Mitchell #
- 11. Alan McFater
- 12. Bill Sidney
- 13. Solly Cantor #
- 14. Gus Rubicini #

#### Canadian Boxers

- 1. Reg Chartrand (Montreal)
- 2. Claude Fortin (Montreal)
- 3. Don Grinton (Brantford)
- 4. Aime Gauthier (Montreal)
- 5. Emil Lamarche (Montreal)
- 6. Tony Percy (Montreal)
- 7. Rocky Perroni (Hamilton)
- 8. Bobby Rivers (Niagara Falls)
- 9. Armand Savoie (Montreal)
- 10. Cookie Wallace (Brantford)

#### American Boxers

- 1. Kid Alfonso (Ohio)
- 2. Charlie Basil (Fulton)
- 3. Larry Bushing (Brooklyn)
- 4. Henry Davis (Hawaii)
- 5. Freddie Dukes (Pittsburgh)
- 6. Joey Giambra (Buffalo)
- 7. Johnny Gibson (Albany)
- 8. Paul Gornik (Penns.)
- 9. Otis Graham (Phil.)
- 10. Jimmy Hall (New York)
- 11. Roger Jackson (New York)
- 12. George Justine (Phil.)
- 13. Ricardo King (Phil.)
- 14. Tex McEwan (Niag. Falls)
- 15. Snuffy Smith (Rochester)

### 1957

#### Toronto Boxers

- 1. Gord Baldwin
- 2. Willie Barboie
- 3. George Chuvalo
- 4. Tommy Corrick
- 5. George Ferenczi
- 6. Sonny Forbes
- 7. Steve Horvath
- 8. Pedro Jimenez
- 9. Arthur King

#### American Boxers

- 1. Bob Baker (Pittsburgh)
- 2. Bob Biehler (Rochester)
- 3. Willie Bell (Syracuse)
- 4. Emil Brtko (Pittsburgh)
- 5. Billie Collins (New York)
- 6. Norm Geddes (Detroit)
- 7. Moses Graham (Buffalo)
- 8. George Green (Detroit)
- 9. Walt Hafer (Kentucky)

10. Ernst Krenzek
11. Red Randell
12. Dave Rent
13. Don Ross
14. Peter Schmidt

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Kenny Brant (Hamilton)
2. Bob Cleroux (Montreal)
3. Bob Moore (Sydney)
4. Pat O'Brien (Brantford)
5. Benny Randell (Halifax)
6. Don Wallace (Barrie)

#### Foreign Boxers

1. Yama Bahama (West Indies)

10. Billy Hunter (Detroit)
11. Bill Jones (Pennsylvania)
12. Tiger Jones (New York)
13. Jack LaQuatra (Pittsburgh)
14. Vince Martinez (New York)
15. Billy McGhee (Buffalo)
16. Les Owens (Syracuse)
17. Jackie Richard (Detroit)
18. Sid Russell (New York)
19. Jimmy Sparks (Detroit)

### 1961

#### Toronto Boxers

1. George Chuvalo
2. Fernand Chretien
3. Billy Fifield
4. Sonny Forbes
5. Colin Fraser
6. Al McKay
7. Charlier Paulis
8. Don Ross
9. Peter Schmidt
10. Willie Yankovich

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Joey Durelle (Montreal)
2. Floyd McCoy (Montreal)
3. Alex Miteff (Argentina)

#### Foreign Boxers

1. Willie Besmanoff (Germany)
2. Joe Erskine (Britain)
3. Alex Miteff (Argentina)

#### American Boxers

1. Willie Bell (Syracuse)
2. Jack Conn (Syracuse)
3. Clarency Floyd (New York)
4. Bob Foster (Washington)
5. Kid Hughes (Pennsylvania)
6. Billy Johnson (New York)
7. George Johnson (New Jersey)
8. Doug Jones (New York)
9. Artie Miller (New York)
10. Chubby Norris (Philadelphia)
11. Floyd Patterson (New York)
12. Dave Shoulders (Detroit)
13. Al Simmons (Syracuse)
14. Babe Simmons (New York)
15. Hobart Spencer (Syracuse)
16. Johnny Taylor (Syracuse)
17. Atilio Tondo (New York)
18. Jimmy Voss (Utica)
19. Jimmy Williams (New York)

### 1965

#### Toronto Boxers

1. Giancarlo Barrazza
2. Frank Bullard
3. George Chuvalo
4. Edmund Deroches
5. Bob Felstein
6. Colin Fraser
7. Julio Mandell #
8. Martin McNiel #
9. Jim Meilleur

#### American Boxers

1. Eddie Andrews (Boston)
2. Jim Christopher (Det.)
3. Von Clay (Philadelphia)
4. Everett Copeland (N. Y.)
5. Red Davis (Boston)
6. Lee Roy Green (K.C.)
7. Lee Hall (Boston)
8. Richie Hall (Boston)
9. Boston Jacobs (No. Caro.)

10. Don Ross
11. Peter Schmidt
- Canadian Boxers
1. Charley Chase (Montreal)

10. Alonzo Johnson (Chi.)
11. Walt Kelly (Boston)
12. Bill Marquhart (Chi.)
13. Bill Neilsen (Omaha)
14. Ernie Terrell (Chicago)
15. Dick Wipperman (Buff.)

1969Toronto Boxers

1. Frank Bullard
2. Carl Caruso #
3. Bob Felstein #
4. Colin Fraser #
5. Clyde Gray
6. Stamford Harris
7. Walter Kelly #
8. Julio Mandell #
9. Julie Mould #
10. Paul Nilsen

Canadian Boxers

1. Leon. Coutierre (Mont.)
2. Serge Proulx (Mont.)

Foreign Boxers

1. Bashir Qubti (Jordan)

American Boxers

1. Tony Burwell (Phil.)
2. Dave Ditmar (Phil.)
3. Tony Hibberts (Buffalo)

1973Toronto Boxers

1. George Chuvalo #
2. Joey Dinardo
3. Bob Felstein
4. Horst Geisler
5. Clyde Gray #
6. Joe Henry
7. Danny Stokes
8. Dave Vent

Canadian Boxers

1. Lloyd Duncan (London)
1. Donato Paduano (Montreal)
2. Al Sparks (Winnipeg)
3. Gary Summerhayes (Brantf.)
4. Johnny Summerhayes (Brantf.)

Foreign Boxers

1. Eddie Blay (Ghana)
2. Ken Buchanan (Scotland)
3. Jose Napoles (Mexico)
4. Arturo Zuniba (Mexico)

American Boxers

1. Keith Averette (Ohio)
2. Roscoe Bell (Miami)
3. Bruce Cantell (Spart.)
4. Walter Cudney (Buffalo)
5. Casey Gacic (Cleveland)
6. Jimmy Hamm (Miami Beach)
7. Ron Harris (Detroit)
8. Roy McMillan (Toledo)
9. Frankie Otero (Miami)
10. Jimmy Owens (Detroit)
11. Al Quinney (Buffalo)
12. Willie Williams (Cle.)
13. Harvey Wilson (Ohio)

1977Toronto Boxers

1. Bobby Bath
2. George Chuvalo
3. Bob Felstein

Canadian Boxers

1. Jim Henry (Montreal)
2. Earl McLeay (Calgary)
3. Ralph Racine (N. Falls)

4. Nicky Furlano
5. Chuck Findlay
6. Horst Geisler #
7. Clyde Gray #
8. Bobby Hughes
9. Norm Kues
10. Leo March
11. Paul Nilsen #
12. Damiano Pelligrini
13. Ron Pettigrew
14. Ron Rouselle

4. Danny Stokes (Oshawa)
- American Boxers
1. Dave Darrell (Buffalo)
  2. Al Franklin (Minn.)
  3. Larry Moore (West Virg.)
  4. Zack Page (Ohio)
  5. Chuck Spicer (Cleve.)
  6. Dave Zguda (Buffalo)

### 1985

#### Toronto Boxers

1. Robert Bath
2. Drew Brown
3. Ricky Burke
4. Paul Campbell
5. Marco Carella
6. Guy Normandeau
7. Remo Dicarlo
8. Wayne Dobbin
9. Tony Ferraro
10. Willie Featherstone
11. Terry Francis
12. Jimmy Gradson
13. Paolo Greco
14. Bobby Hackett
15. Ray Henderson
16. Chico Hernandez
17. John Kahlbenn
18. Robert Marcos
19. Roddy McDonald #
20. Eddie Melo
21. Tony Morrison
22. Shawn O'Sullivan #
23. Rick Papa
24. Leonard Pinnock
25. Donnie Poole #
26. Bobby Roe #
27. Donovan Ruddock #
28. Alex Temelkov

#### Canadian Boxers

1. Terry Albert (London)
  2. Gabriel Da Silva (Calg.)
  3. Rick Fortuna (Ni. Falls)
  4. Zest Holmes (Windsor)
  5. Clinton Linson (Mont.)
  6. Mike Fornier (Detroit)
  7. Chris Ranelli (Sudb.)
  8. Robby Robinson (Windsor)
  9. Brent Schroder (Sudbury)
  10. Ken Smith (Windsor)
  11. Felix Vanderpool (Kit.)
- American Boxers

1. Roger Brown (Buffalo)
2. Tim Bullock (Detroit)
3. Billy Chapin (Ohio)
4. Albert Collazzo (Pit)
5. Andre Crowder (Ohio)
6. Mike Fornier (Detroit)
7. Bobby Green (Dunnville)
8. Duran Herrodin (Buffalo)
9. Huey Leggett (Toledo)
10. Tim Long (Akron)
11. Frank Minton (Indian.)
12. Eddie Petty (Cleve.)
13. Larry Phelps (Cleve.)
14. George Reedy (Indian.)
15. Joe Senegal (Detroit)

VITA AUCTORIS

Name: Andrew John Lindsay

Place of Birth: Scarborough, Ontario

Date of Birth: August 7, 1965

Education: West Hill Collegiate Institute, Scarborough, 1979-  
84  
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario  
1984-89, B.P.H.E., B.Ed.

University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario  
1992-94, M.H.K.